AS INNOCENT AS A BABY

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A Novel.

" . . As we jog on, either laugh with me, or at me, or, in short, do anything,—only keep your temper."

TRISTRAM SHANDY.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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Dedicated

TO

MRS. GEORGE HALE.

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AS INNOCENT AS A BABY.

CHAPTER I.

SANDHAVEN.

HARD upon the edge of that portion of the British coast which turns its white front towards France, stands—not nestles like most fictional places—but stands boldly, and, to my mind, somewhat foolhardily, a town called —no matter what. Let it be Sandhaven. Some of the houses are built almost upon the very brink of the cliff, so that you may see the sands from the uppermost windows

nearly eighty feet below. The town lies crowded behind these houses, as if all the other houses wanted to get a view of the sea, and meant to push the buildings that hide the prospect over the cliff.

We have had the good or bad luck to hit upon an old town. The local guide-book is full of queer legends, historical and otherwise, respecting it. What if the historian trips in his dates? makes Charles II. in exile land here two days after he was buried? makes the Dutch broadside the town as they passed en route for the Thames, when the square and ponderous Dutch historian of that war in his square and ponderous folios positively affirms that they did not come within four leagues of this coast? No matter. Let us believe all our guide-book is so complaisant as to tell us. Sandhaven deserves to be notable.

Only look at the old town. Where else shall you meet with such narrow streets

out of Frankfort? with such delightful, fat, old-fashioned houses, gable-roofed, with frilled eves and overhanging stories throwing thoughtful shadows over latticed windows, whence the old women may gossip with their neighbours opposite whilst they smoke their cavendish and ply their darning needles? The nearest railway station is a long way off, at C——y, between which city and Sandhaven a coach runs twice a week. We think of Fielding and Tobias when we read of this coach. Aren't Roderick and Strap in bed together at that inn yonder? Isn't Adams drinking sack in the sooty chimney-corner? and Molly Seagrim fighting like Sampson in the churchyard, and Western cursing in his Dresden-china-pattern parlour?

The fact is Sandhaven has refused to come forward with the nineteenth century. It is a very drowsy, weedy, dull old town, scarcely enlivened by the sea, scarcely

redeemed by its picturesque quaintness. It is Sunday all the year round with it. There is a bank, but who is ever seen to enter it? The manager is always upstairs dining or playing at cribbage with his wife, whilst his clerks read novels over their ledgers. There is an hotel, but judge of mine host's takings when I protest the brief visit of a commercial traveller shall cause the utmost excitement to prevail among the waiters.

And yet Sandhaven has a snug and comfortable air, suggestive, not indeed of opulence, but of competency. This arises in a great measure from the cleanly, homely aspect of the houses. The dark burnished windows curtained with warm colours, the brass knockers so bright that the sun sparkles on them as if they were crystal, the white steps and neat, green-painted doors, the ruddy fires bronzing the kitchens, the white muslin screening the

bedrooms, very greatly contribute to the notion of money and plenty indoors. You think of the cellars these old houses possess and the old wines they bury in their darkness. You draw a picture of big book-cases filled with marrowy volumes of which the owners are ignorant of the preciousness, but which they would not part with for fifty times their value because they have been in the family so long. You have a vision of fine engravings glazed and framed in black ebony—Vertues and Hogarths and Hollars and Fourniers. And how about the crockery? are not here tea-sets, bowls, shepherds and their wives and mistresses, jugs, vases for a sight whereof thousands of Ebrew Jews and honest Christian brokers would leave their shops, their beds, and their families? And, dear Miss Scroggins, most acidulated of old maids—think of the cats! think of the wonderful fine cats—tortoiseshells, Persians,

ha!—there must be in such wonderful old houses! fine cats, look you, and old silver (friend Lazarus), and perchance a rich breed of hens at the back, and more pictures and books in the garrets—dim garrets, with sloping sides, and an atmosphere smelling of dry lavender.

The marine population of Sandhaven is small. Can this be attributed to the scarcity of public-houses? The fact is, Sandhaven is not a fishing town. They catch shrimps here—fine shrimps, brown shrimps, fresh shrimps. There is a kind of jetty on the sands, about which lie or float half a score of rowing boats. These boats help to put a little money in the watermen's pockets when the few visitors Sandhaven gets come down in June, or when a passing ship signals for a pilot. But if the boatmen depended on their boats for a living they would fare but ill. In sober truth, they chiefly support themselves by catching and

selling and potting shrimps. All day long fellows in coarse shirts make the placid streets sordid with morose cries of "Fine shrimps! brown shrimps!" and find custom. They can scarce walk half a dozen yards indeed without being brought to a stand by a sudden shower of finger-nails falling upon a window. The shrimp sellers are pretty much the only persons you meet in the streets. Now and then a dog—here and there an old woman—but chiefly shrimp sellers. What becomes of the people who live in the houses? You ask yourself that question at Sandhaven, looking round upon the empty streets and staring hard at the dusky windows in search of human life. Does the population lie abed all day? Have they back premises, high walled, in which they take their walks?

But once a week the church-bells summon them forth; and out they go, a com-

pany of people well in keeping with their pale, gable-roofed homes. Truly a Sabbath at Sandhaven is a day well worth observing. What bonnets and gowns and boots! Do Rowlandson's caricatures ever step out of the books they embellish and go to church at Sandhaven? It is hard to tell who is young and who is old when all are dressed in old-fashioned attire.

Prettier churches than the two they have at Sandhaven no one could wish to attend. St. Michael's is truly beautiful. Look at it on a summer evening when the old walls are steeped in the gold of the setting sun; it then resembles an exquisite painting. A churchyard surrounds it, and the taste of the mourners who have decorated it harmonizes happily with the inspiration of the architect. The graves are well tended —the grass is rich and vivid; the stones, even the most venerable among them, are upright, without that haggard, sideways

aspect which makes death so ugly in old churchyards. There is no gilt, no cheaply wrought figures of angels kneeling, or stone statues of draped women weeping; but there are many crosses chequering the mounds with the shadows under which all Christians should love to sleep, and in summer time many flowers which, growing out of the hearts of the dead, typify the pure and sweet-smelling life that springs from the grave. The other church—but we shall probably have to attend St. Mary's during the course of this story, and a description of it may as well be deferred.

Leaving the churches, we will make our way back to the cliff. This is the High Street we are in. Which is the pavement, and which is the road? Here comes a butcher's cart; look to the right, and you will observe that an aged woman backs into a shop-door whilst the cart passes, that she may not be run over. We *must*

pause a moment to take a peep at the stationer's shop-window. Over the doorway is "Sampson's Marine Library, founded 1803." What a queer old bay window is that with "Reading-Room" written on the wire blinds! Mr. Sampson watches us through the shop-window, and respectfully trusts that we mean to buy something. Shall we step in, and ask him to recommend us a novel? Pshaw! who doesn't know what he will advise? There is "Cœlebs in search of a Wife." (Isn't it time that search came to an end, Sampson?) There is "Thinks I to Myself," a most diverting piece, sir, supposed to be written by a distinguished statesman. Yes, yes, we know all about that. There are the "Waverley Novels"—see, the original edition! the genuine brownish paper and the genuine old duodecimo! And there are the "Scottish Chiefs," and Lady Bury's books and Lady Blessington's (in

double columns). Mr. Sampson, we make you our compliments on your extensive and well-selected library. Standing in your dim little shop, with the foggy chandelier, and the snuff-coloured books against the smoke-coloured wall, and the low ceiling so low that our hats will carry away a cobweb or two, fancy whisks us off our legs, and transports us, great heaven! how many years back. If we ask for a current magazine, will you give us Tom Campbell's "New Monthly?" If we ask for a current newspaper, will you give us the "John Bull," with those verses of Hook in it which are convulsing the Tories with merriment? Is Pye or Southey poet-laureate? Whose speeches are most relished in the House, Canning's or Sheridan's? What is all this talk about Byron and Greece? And, if you please, we want Tom Moore's new poem. . . . Never heard of George Eliot? Think Mrs. Trollope and Anthony the

same person! Pickwick the last addition to your list of new novels! Come, let us make haste to quit this marine library, and satisfy ourselves by an attentive examination of our clothes and our minds in the 1874 sunshine that the world's progress since 1803 is *not* a dream of our own—that we are *not* dressed like Tom and Jerry in the story, and that we *are* the heirs of all the ages, and the contemporary of Dr. Cumming!

There is the Sea. We approach the wooden railings, which prevent aged people and children from tumbling over the cliff, and peer downwards with dizzy heads and ugly inclinations. Behind us is a row of houses, some flat-roofed, some with gables, some with balconies, and pretty nearly all of them with the curtains drawn to keep the sun out. It is but a dozen steps from these houses to the railings we clutch. What if the chalk cliffs should give way

one night! The sea is beautiful, but I should love a remoter view of it than is to be obtained from these structures. Upon the far horizon distant ships are sailing; we should not see their highest sails from the sands. One permanent object rests upon the steel-coloured element—a red-hulled light-ship. It looks but three miles distant; it is in reality nine. There is a hidden danger where that red-coated sentinel of the deep keeps watch: a sunken rock, let us call it, which, when the waves are high, darts its black fang through the froth, keen and hard enough to bite a hole in the stoutest iron-clad afloat. When the darkness falls a red star rises over that rock, and so faithful is the beacon to the horror it illumines—like a woman's love glittering over a life all other souls abhor—that no blast can extinguish it, and no cloud hide it.

To right and left of us stretch the cliffs.

In summer-time their white battlements match grandly with the blue sea that washes their feet, and the swelling green or gold of the corn-fields that enrich their summits. In winter-time they wear a desolate aspect, wild and melancholy and naked. When the great waves come rolling out of the larger ocean beyond and boil around this bulwark of chalk, the spray soars like a veil spread across the wind, and the caverns in the cliffs bellow as if a thunder-storm were imprisoned in the white rocks.

Sandhaven is a place to visit, but hardly to live in. Even people on inconceivably limited means—who make the need of economy the grand apology for everything unpleasant—would find it terribly slow. But for newly-married people, for invalids, for authors who can't write if there is a barrel-organ nearer than the horizon, Sandhaven is a good town—for a

month, say. From August to October, let us conceive, when the heat is moderate and bathing agreeable. For lovers there is, veritably, no such spot. There are holes in the rocks where Augustus may sit with Wilhelmina all day long, and not a creature see him; the water laps the gold-ribbed sand at his feet, and he may set his soft breathings to immortal tunes. Yes; I allow a shrimper driving his net may pass Augustus's nook, and mark the posture of his arm, the inclination of his head. But who cares for shrimpers? And who thinks a shrimper's work so easy that he can find leisure to watch Augustus spooning with Wilhelmina in a hole in a cliff? Pass, unhappy shrimper! and let Augustus, instead of being disturbed by you, rather hold that your presence gives effect and colour, and even point, to his ardent declarations. How would Mr. S——, or Dr. C——, or an esteemed contributor to

a well-known magazine, deal with such a text that it should have a most impertinent application to love? "The lover, like the shrimper, walks along a smooth path." Yes. "But neither of them sees the path he is walking along." Good! "There are crabs ready to bite the unheeding toe, and sea-leeches prepared to fasten upon the unconscious leg." Relations! a palpable hit! excellent! "There are rocks sharp enough to skin the shin, and holes deep enough—" Yes, yes, we take your moral, Mister Preacher, but by your leave, we'll begin our story.

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CHAPTER II.

MRS. LOVEL AND HER LITTLE FRIEND.

IT was evening at Sandhaven, and a very cold and cheerless evening too. A strong winter gale blew from the south-west through the darkness, and drove the torn clouds across the wan moon. At sea all was froth and movement and uproar. On shore—in the streets—the oil-lamps flickered and quivered, and some were blown out. There were sailors talking in the alehouse, at the corner of Fish Street, about the likelihood of a wreck or two before the morning; and on the cliffs were several dark figures con-

stantly bending telescopes in the direction of the great red star that burned steadily far out in the darkness.

A little man, swathed from his neck to his boots in a long cloak, had been upwards of twenty minutes giving battle to the wind, all the way from a house hard by St. Mary's church, to the gate opposite which he had come to a pause, while he groped for the latch. Confronting him, a little way up a garden, was the outline of a house, whereof the surface was wrapped in gloom, save where, through a chink in the shutters on the right, a thin ray of light stole forth to tell of life and warmth indoors. Discovering the latch at last, the little man in the cloak passed along the garden and rapped lustily upon the hall-door. The servant, who admitted him, dropped a curtsey on beholding his face.

"Good-evening, Jane," says he. "Is your mistress alone?"

"Yes, sir."

Here a side door opens, and a small old-fashioned lady, dressed in black silk, with long mittens covering her hands, and a lace cap on her head, pops her nose out and stares earnestly.

"Is that you, Mr. Lockfield?" she exclaims. "What a dreadful night, to be sure! what a walk you must have had! were you caught in the rain? You are frozen to death, I know."

"On the contrary, I am as dry as a bone and warm as toast," responds the little man, pulling off his wide-awake and exhibiting a head as bald as an egg. "Jane, give me a hand with this cloak."

Jane takes the cloak and out steps its tenant, a compact, round, rosy-cheeked, black-eyed divine—a miniature clergyman! about five feet high and four feet round, with a suggestion of beautiful smoothness in his aspect, so that, as he smiles, it seems

a necessity that his fat outline should break into a thousand tiny ripples. His double chin rests on his cravat, and the few black and gray hairs that flourish on the back of his head are oiled and brushed with great care over his ears. He is quite like a toy—the handiwork of some ingenious mechanician. He looks at his boots and at the back of his trowsers as he stands for a moment or two in the light that streams through the door which the old-fashioned lady has thrown open; but no speck of mud is visible. Yet, before following the old lady, he goes to the doormat and wipes his feet with as much activity as he would display in dancing a hornpipe.

"Pray come close to the fire—quite close to the fire," says the old lady as he enters the room. "Take that arm-chair; a hassock is under it. Anxious as I am to see you, I hardly thought you would have the courage to venture out on such an evening.

Is there any chance of your catching cold?"

"No chance that I can conceive, Mrs. Lovel," replies the little clergyman, bending over the fire with outstretched hands.

"Can I get you some tea?"

"I thank you."

The bell is pulled and the tea-tray brought in. It is pleasant to watch Mrs. Lovel, who is the complete picture of an old-fashioned lady, moving about the room with a bunch of jingling keys in her hands, producing cake from one cupboard, and biscuits from another, and calling to Jane to make some toast, while she dips a silver spoon into an ancient tea-caddy, turning constantly to the little brass kettle which Jane has set on the fire, to see if it boils.

And now behold Mr. Lockfield sitting, one leg across the other, in a capacious arm-chair, holding in one white hand a cup of steaming tea, and in the other white

hand a piece of crisp buttered toast, looking the while indescribably rosy and comfortable.

The dark night outside, the hoarse gale roaring through the trees in the lane, and filling the wide chimney with human outcries, do but make Mrs. Lovel's parlour more delightful. There is a glowing fire in the grate which outshines the whiter brilliance of the slender-stemmed bronze lamp on the table, as can be seen by the shadows that dance upon the walls and ceiling. The floor is thickly carpeted. Before the fireplace is a big skin that serves for a hearth-rug, from which a cat, with a kitten, curled between her legs, watches, with drowsy eyes, every little movement of Mr. Lockfield's small white hands. The mantelpiece is of carved wood, with a bas-relief for a centre-piece representing Cupid offering an arrow to Venus—Cupid not unlike Mr. Lockfield. The paper on the wall resembles

chintz. The chairs have worked seats, and there is a screen at the end of the room covered with birds and foliage. On the mantelpiece is a clock, with exposed works, under a glass shade, topped by a mimic structure, from the doorway of which an elderly gentleman makes a bow punctually once an hour. A politer elderly gentleman never breathed. He is, indeed, one of the old school. Behind the clock is a looking-glass of which the plate is so dim that peering into it is like taking a peep through a window into a spiritual world. Of course there are pictures round the room: over the door a painting of Mrs. Lovel's papa's house in Suffolk; over the sofa, two heads, one in a periwig, the other in a mob-cap; one a fat-faced man in a striped waistcoat and a white cloth round an apoplectical neck; the other an elderly woman, with a placid countenance and a nose the exact counterpart of Mrs. Lovel's. Oppo-

site these, again, the portrait of a gentleman—Mrs. Lovel's husband, if you please, dead and gone these twenty years—a somewhat angular face, with thin lips and hollow, lustrous eyes, hair cut like women wear theirs nowadays, across the forehead, and a coat collar above the back of his ears. All this furniture, with many a knick-knack beyond my knowledge to name, lighted up by a ruby-coloured fire and a sperm-oil lamp, composes Mrs. Lovel's parlour as it is beheld by Mr. Lockfield, to whom the old lady had despatched her servant that afternoon, with her compliments, and request that, if he was *quite* at leisure, would he mind stepping over to her house that evening, as she particularly wanted to have some conversation with him?

"I have been longing to see you since midday," says Mrs. Lovel, "ever since I received this letter," and she draws an envelope from her pocket and rubs it slowly

against the back of her hand; "but I never could have guessed that the weather would be so stormy. Am I taking you away from any duty? Isn't there a lecture with dissolving views to-night at Mr. Hammer's school?"

"There is no lecture to-night that I know of, and my duties—well, Mrs. Lovel, a clergyman's duties never end. But we must, we *must* be permitted to snatch a moment from our serious labours to devote to our friends."

He gives her a fat smile, empties his tea-cup, and places it upon the table with a gesture that signifies he requires no more; pulls out a snow-white pocket-handkerchief which he passes elegantly over his mouth, and, recrossing his little legs, clasps his hands blandly upon his waistcoat.

Mrs. Lovel takes the poker and stirs the fire. There is plainly something on her mind that makes her nervous. Mr. Lock-

field hopes that she is not going to perplex his memory with a religious scruple. Theology is not his strong point. He feels, as he examines Mrs. Lovel's face, that he wouldn't like her to ask him a question that he could not answer. But she soon makes him easy by putting the poker down, and saying—

"Did you ever hear me speak of a sister of mine who eloped with a young gentleman in the army shortly after I married Mr. Lovel?"

"I don't recollect," says Mr. Lockfield, after thinking.

"Her name was Lavinia. My father, who was then an aged man, was much shocked by her behaviour; for the young gentleman—*though* a gentleman—was not a worthy man, Mr. Lockfield."

"No worthy man elopes."

"You are quite right. It is teaching a girl to rebel against her family's wishes.

It is an act of selfishness and deceit that cannot be too strongly censured."

Now Mrs. Lovel ought to have added that when she said that Lavinia's husband was not a worthy man, she meant that he was poor.

"We all felt Lavinia's conduct very strongly. There was no need for her to elope, for her home was a comfortable one, and I am sure that papa was the best of parents. Mr. Lovel was the most shocked of all," continued she, with a glance at her husband's picture, "and told me that I should be espousing my sister's cause against papa if I answered the letter she wrote to me from India. I didn't answer her letter, and never heard from her again, though, believe me, Mr. Lockfield, I used very often to think of her, and wondered where she lived and what she was doing, and if she had any family."

"I quite believe you, Mrs. Lovel. I

am no stranger to the goodness of your heart."

"And yet I sometimes think I was to blame in not answering her letter or making an effort to get papa to forgive her. A woman never likes to feel that she has friends who love her, so much as when she is newly married."

"But if she forfeits their love?"

"But true friends, parents, and brothers, and sisters, should be forgiving."

"They seldom are," says Mr. Lockfield, stroking his chin.

"It is true," Mrs. Lovel goes on, "that I am an old woman now, but I hope I am not so old as not to understand that love is a very tyrannical passion, and rules our hearts just as if we had no judgment at all."

"I am afraid that is the case," answered Mr. Lockfield, looking as sentimental as the prosaic condition of a fat face and a rosy smile will suffer him.

"And then, again, when a woman marries, the change with her is very great; much greater than it is with a man, who keeps his name, and his relations too, if he likes."

"If his wife likes," thinks Mr. Lockfield.

"But a woman," pursues Mrs. Lovel, turning the letter round and round on her lap, "not only changes her name but her family. All the old traditions—the old landmarks—have to be pulled up to make way for new ones. When this is gradually done it isn't painful, but it becomes very painful when it is done all at once. We allowed Lavinia to drift away from us as if she were no better than a stranger whom we had sheltered for a night, and then dismissed without a thought. I feel my heartlessness now that I am growing old; yes, indeed I do, Mr. Lockfield, more than I can express. Had Lavinia treated me as I

treated her, what should I have thought? We were sisters, and had played together, and went to the same school. Was *I* so faultless that I should have taken offence at her indiscretion? Oh, Mr. Lockfield, we all of us need each other's prayers and forgiveness."

"That we do," rejoined Mr. Lockfield, heartily. "This is a very wicked world; an evil-doing world, Mrs. Lovel."

"And now Lavinia is dead!" cries Mrs. Lovel, fixing her moistening eyes on the fire; "she is out of reach of all ill-feeling. The news reached me at midday; it has given me a great shock. True, I did not know where she was, nor whether she was alive or dead, but then people may wonder without being sure, and it is only certainties that shock us. I *know* she is dead now, and has been dead four years. To think of my only sister being dead four years, and my not hearing of it till this very day!"

Mr. Lockfield begins to think that Mrs. Lovel has sent for him to tell him of this grief and get his sympathy and prayers. He accordingly turns over in his mind such smooth-sounding consolatory phrases as experience has furnished him with, meaning straightway to deliver a discourse on the insecurity of human life, and the need of submission, but is interrupted by the old lady suddenly exclaiming:

"I want you to advise me upon my sister's child. The letter I received to-day is from a stranger, who signs himself 'R. Malcolmson.' He says he knew Colonel Marchmont—who was a lieutentant when he ran away with my sister—in India, and has been a neighbour of his for the last five years, at a place called La Force, in France, where Lavinia died four years ago. He tells me that Colonel Marchmont was drowned in a river, just a month since, leaving his daughter, Jessie, quite penni-

less. All that he had to live on was his half pay, which ceases at his death."

At this point Mrs. Lovel feels in her pocket for her spectacles, which she puts on, and opening the letter, searches about for the passage she proposes to read.

"'I was on very familiar terms with Colonel Marchmont'—this is what Mr. Malcolmson writes," says she, looking over her spectacles at the clergyman.

Mr. Lockfield nods.

"'I was on very familiar terms with Colonel Marchmont, and he was often in the habit of mentioning your name as the only relative his child possessed who was at all likely to befriend her should he be called away suddenly. In asking you to provide your niece with a home in your own house, I am only doing what I am sure the colonel would have begged me to do could he have foreseen the fearful suddenness with which his life was to be closed.' And here is a post-

script in which he asks me to write by return of post. But that is impossible, for I must have time to think."

"Yes, you require time to think," says Mr. Lockfield, playing with his broad silk watch-guard, and looking at the old lady with his little good-natured black eyes as much as to say, "How do you want me to advise? for I am entirely your humble servant."

"My heart tells me that I ought instantly to receive my niece," continues Mrs. Lovel; "but I am no longer a young woman, Mr. Lockfield. I have lived so long alone, and my habits are so fixed, that I am really scared by the idea of anybody sharing my home with me. And my niece is from France, too! her manners may be odd. How has she been reared? What is her religion? Is her temper good? I *must* be advised!" she cries, with a helpless face. "If once I receive her, I must keep her."

"You certainly couldn't very well turn her out."

"God forbid! I shouldn't dream of such a thing. For some reasons I should not object to have her. It would make my sister happy in the next world to feel that her child had found a home, and—do you think the dead can forgive, Mr. Lockfield?"

Mr. Lockfield shakes his head slowly.

"This is a very awful consideration," says he.

"But you can't think," cries she, eagerly, "that a person you have wronged would continue hating you after death? Does not the grave cleanse all passion from the soul? Could any spirit be acceptable to its Maker that carried resentment away with it from the world?"

Mr. Lockfield shifts his little legs and knits his little brows, whilst he once more shakes his head and gazes intently at the fire.

"Let us hope," he observes, "that your sister is in a state of felicity. By assuming her happiness we may satisfy ourselves that any ill-feeling she cherished towards you in this life has fallen from her, for if this were not the case she could not be happy."

"I see, I understand you, Mr. Lockfield. I have thought, while waiting for you this evening, that my niece might be a very agreeable person to have about me, gay, sympathetic, such a companion as money couldn't hire, if I wanted a companion. But on the other hand, she might be the reverse of this, slow-minded and sulky, and irreligious. And what a life I should lead! I think Mr. Malcolmson might have told me more about her, though I doubt whether I could have depended upon what he would naturally have said, for he was her papa's friend, and wishes to find her a home. Poor child! it is a dreadful thing for a girl to

lose both her parents. What ought I to do, Mr. Lockfield?"

"To tell you the truth, Mrs. Lovel," answers Mr. Lockfield, slowly and with the solemn utterance that befits the delivery of an important opinion, "I think that you ought to receive her."

"You think so?" cries the old lady.

"I do."

"Why?" asks the other, who wishes to examine her own resolution by the light of the clergyman's mind.

"Because," says Mr. Lockfield, "she is poor, and in want of friends."

"Yes, I have taken that view."

"Because," pursues the clergyman, "she is a girl, and is therefore incapable of helping herself."

Mrs. Lovel heaves a great sigh.

"Again, because she is your sister's child; and if we refuse to succour our own flesh and blood, we sin unpardonably"

Mrs. Lovel clasps her mittened hands, and watches her adviser over the spectacles she has forgotten to remove.

"Nor are these the only considerations that should determine you," says Mr. Lockfield, putting out a little leg, and scratching the cat's back with the toe of his boot. "As you suggested just now, she may be irreligious. How long has she lived in France? Some years; France is the hot-bed of infidelity. The French are by nature sceptics, and they are rendered absolute unbelievers by the exorbitant demands made upon them by the character of the religion that obtains in that nation. Your niece has, in all probability, suffered from the example of the free-thinkers in whose society she has unavoidably moved, if she has moved in any society at all in France."

"Ay, that is my fear!" interrupts Mrs. Lovel, with a very uneasy face.

"But suppose that it has been reserved

for you to reclaim her? to bring her back to the knowledge of the truth?"

"That is to say, if she is ignorant of it."

"Of course. You are very competent to undertake such a duty."

"But I am not so young as I was twenty years ago," says Mrs. Lovel, who does not appear to be irresistibly fascinated by the prospect of undertaking the cure of a soul. Then suddenly brightening up she exclaims,

"After all, Mr. Lockfield, she may be a very religious girl—a sound Protestant."

"Sound Protestants and very religious girls are rare, ma'am," says Mr. Lockfield.

"I wish I could thoroughly make up my mind," cries Mrs. Lovel. "I don't think I ought to be prevented from doing a good action by any fear of the consequences. I oughtn't to mind a little trouble; I must submit to inconveniences. Hark, how high

the wind is! what can be more depressing than the noise the wind makes! I can't help thinking of my niece, and that she is homeless and without money, when I hear the wind. Oh! get along with you, do!" cries she to the cat, which makes a sudden spring into her lap. "You're always frightening me!"

"'Cast thy bread upon the waters'—you know the text, Mrs. Lovel."

"Quite well," answers the old lady, smoothing her dress. "I will write to-morrow, and tell them to send my niece. But oh! Mr. Lockfield, I believe I have lived out my quiet life, and must now expect trouble."

"If that is your fear, don't send for your niece."

"Oh, but I have made up my mind to have her, sir."

"Still I wouldn't act hastily, if I were you. If you really apprehend inconveni-

ences from your niece coming to live with you, you ought to give yourself time to—"

"Don't unsettle my mind, Mr. Lockfield," exclaims the old lady, imploringly. "I shall be easier when I have got used to my determination."

"Well, let us hope that your niece will prove a comfort to you," says Mr. Lockfield, twisting a ring on his little finger, and looking at the clock. "Surely you must feel dull now and then, and should be well pleased to have a companion."

"No, no, I am never dull," answers the old lady, quickly, deprecating the notion inspired by the clergyman's remark that she could in anywise share in the benefit she meant to confer. "For many years after Mr. Lovel died I missed his society greatly, and would have parted with all I had to have been blessed with a child, to brighten up the lonely days I passed. But I have got quite used to my own society now. Things

go just as I want them. I keep one servant, and she knows my habits. I can go to bed and rise at any hour I choose; have what I like for dinner; when I go out, dawdle as long as it suits me. I hope these privileges haven't made me selfish. I hope not, I hope not."

"I am sure not, which is better than hoping," exclaims Mr. Lockfield, with a rosy smile.

"I like to be thoroughly independent," exclaimed Mrs. Lovel. "The family circle has its charms; but I can't help thinking that where there are many to be considered there can be little individual pleasure."

"Why, no; I agree with you. Where there is diversity of taste—and how diverse taste is in families, to be sure!—only one at a time can be content, the rest must suffer. At our time of life, Mrs. Lovel, the submission of our tastes and habits is a dif-

ficult thing. I, for one, find it exceedingly disagreeable to vary a custom. What I have been used to I want, and the longer I live the more I want what I am accustomed to have."

"I hope my niece is a girl of sense," says Mrs. Lovel, picking at a tuck in her skirt.

"Was her mother clever?"

"Ye—es," answers Mrs. Lovel, slowly. "She was never a silly girl. She could make mistakes, like her betters in mind; but they were seldom what you would call stupid mistakes."

Mr. Lockfield nods. The drowsy influence of the fire is beginning to affect him. He looks at the clock, and then fixes his eyes on Mrs. Lovel, somewhat sleepily, considering whether he shall stay and sup with the old lady, or go home.

"You didn't know the father?" he asks, vaguely.

"Whose father? do you mean my niece's?"

"Yes—of course—your niece's. Ha!"

"Not intimately. When he found papa objected to his visits he kept away from the house, and met my sister secretly. I remember him a handsome young fellow. It must be owned that army men are mostly gentlemen. I very well recollect papa being quite rude to him one day; but the young man did not lose his temper. He made papa a bow and went away, and never called again, and I couldn't help respecting him. What changes a few years bring! To think of both those lovers being dead now, leaving a grown-up girl for me to take care of! I remember the hedge I once saw them sitting behind. It was summer-time, and I can never smell new-mown hay without thinking of those two with their arms round each other, under the shadow of that hedge, too intent on their whispering to heed me.

How small poor Laura's error seems now that she is dead! When those we love, who have erred in their lives, die, I would have the grave be like the night, in which nothing can be seen that does not shine. I thank God that I now remember nothing but my poor sister's virtues."

"This is a very wicked world—an evil-doing world," says Mr. Lockfield, swallowing a yawn. And under pretence of examining the weather, he leaves his chair, that a walk to the window may wake him up.

"You will remain and sup with me, Mr. Lockfield? It is only just eight."

"Thank you, Mrs. Lovel," says the clergyman, letting fall the curtain, and returning to the fire. "I think I must be getting home."

"I will order the supper to be got ready at once, if you will stay," says the old lady, making a gesture with her hand towards

the bell-rope. Mr. Lockfield reflects for a moment, and then declines. He feels that should he again settle himself in the peculiarly comfortable arm-chair he has been occupying, he must inevitably fall asleep, a circumstance which could not fail to give offence, considering that the sole motive of his visit is to hearken to Mrs. Lovel's doubts and sentiments respecting her niece, and to advise her upon the subject of the young lady's reception.

"And you think, then, that I shall be acting wisely in taking my niece to live with me?" asks Mrs. Lovel, after expressing her regret that Mr. Lockfield will not remain to supper, and rising as she addresses him.

They make a picturesque spectacle as they stand facing each other on the big skin before the fire-place. They are both of the same height, though Mrs. Lovel's cap tends to give an exaggerated notion of her stature.

The mantelpiece is on a level with their noses, and the old lady can just see the top of the clergyman's bald head, distorted in the lowermost rim of the looking-glass behind the clock. The kitten seems a full-grown cat, alongside of them; and when the cat herself gets up, with curved back and a mighty stretching of her fore legs, she instantly throws the diminutive couple out of human proportions.

"And you think," says Mrs. Lovel, "that I shall be acting wisely in taking my niece to live with me?"

"I do," responds Mr. Lockfield.

"You can quite understand that Mr. Malcolmson's proposal should have made me nervous. His letter contained very unexpected news. It imposes a very heavy obligation on me. I don't remember ever receiving a greater shock—Yes! once I was very much frightened; that night, Mr. Lockfield, when a drunken man knocked at

my door, and threatened to burn the house down if I didn't order the servant to admit him."

"Ay, that would have tried a field-marshal's nerves. But to revert to your niece: whilst you have been talking to me I have been thinking the matter seriously over; and have come to the conclusion that you could not do less than give this orphan your protection and love. Remember, Mrs. Lovel, that the highest wisdom is a virtuous act. We none of us can ever suffer by doing good."

"That should determine me," says the old lady, with a placid smile.

"If you should find her deficient in—in a spiritual sense," observes Mr. Lockfield, moving towards the door, "you may depend upon my giving you every assistance in my power to improve her."

"Thank you, I shall not fail to point you

out to her as one willing and able to be her best friend."

"After you, Mrs. Lovel," says the clergyman.

"I can but serve her temporally."

"And that is a very great deal in this age of selfishness."

Jane comes up out of the kitchen on hearing voices in the hall, and helps Mr. Lockfield to get into his cloak. Mrs. Lovel still hangs about the rosy little priest, repeating her regrets that he will not bear her company at supper, and expressing many hopes that he will not take cold. He makes his escape at last, his farewell words, in reply to a question asked with a most anxious face, being: "Depend upon it, you will be doing your duty in receiving this orphan—and the knowledge that you have done your duty will support you under the heaviest afflictions that may befall you;" a view of the subject which, whether consolatory or not,

Mrs. Lovel carries with her back to the warm fire, and chews upon until the entrance of Jane, with the supper tray, furnishes her with another interest.

CHAPTER III.

MRS. LOVEL.

MRS. LOVEL'S husband had been a native of Sandhaven, to which town he had brought his wife very shortly after their marriage, and there she had lived ever since. Her house was her own, and she had five hundred a year; and as she had no family and kept but one servant, it is intelligible that she should have been considered a well-to-do woman. People who had known Lovel said that his relict deserved her fortune, meaning that whilst he lived his lady had to put up with more inconveniences and vexations than

five hundred a year would have got most of the sex to submit to. They said he was a monomaniac—mad on the subject of religion; that twice a year he was visited with an access of insanity, when he would spring towards the carts in the street with the design of throwing himself under their wheels; and that all the year round he would refuse to go to church, affirming that he was possessed of a devil, who had so much power over his soul, that he could scarcely see a clergyman or hearken to a sermon without a mad desire to shriek out and blaspheme. He survived his marriage five years, though it seemed a great deal longer than that to Mrs. Lovel. She buried him in St. Mary's churchyard, with a fine stone over him, on which she caused to be engraved a text that subtly referred to the disease by which he had perished. People couldn't pity her when they saw the little dame in deep mourning; they all said that

Lovel's death must be a Godsend to her, and that she was very lucky not to have had any family, as it was ten to one the children would have inherited Lovel's affliction.

The effect of this bereavement was to give development to many excellent qualities in Mrs. Lovel; she speedily made herself eminent for her charities. She had a big closet in a room near her kitchen filled with physic and port wine and pots of jam, and the like, which she dispensed along with sixpences and shillings once a week to such of the Sandhaven poor as could procure a recommendation to her from the clergyman of the parish. She was very constant in her attendance at church. She found pleasure in visiting sick-beds, and never entered a poor man's home without leaving behind her some more substantial memorial of her visit than the recollection of kind and helpful words. It was natural

that she should become a very popular person at Sandhaven; the poor loved her and blessed her. Those who were well to do quoted her as an example to their children, and spoke of her as the best specimen of a Christian woman they had ever heard of.

But as time advanced her benevolence lost its activity. She never, indeed, missed an opportunity of doing good, but she was not to be found as heretofore reading comforting words by sick-beds, or dispensing her bounty in humble homes. This was reasonable enough. She was growing old. Her arm-chair and her fire were conditions of life she could not quit for long without a sense as of a loss of being. Moreover, she lived so much to herself, that, in defiance of her heart, certain selfish habits—what she, at least, would have called selfish ten years before—got hold of her, and became despotic. Her life was a routine, and

whatever caused her to depart from the beaten track was odious: for this reason she saw no company. Indeed, her friends could not make her more unhappy than by asking her to drink tea or join them in a round game, for then she had to change her dress; then she had to ride in a fly that was bound to smell, if it did not actually feel, damp; then she had to forego the delicious half-hour's nap before supper, and leave her house unprotected save by one feeble maid.

But Mr. Lockfield was always welcome. The Reverend John Lockfield, rector of St. Mary's, Sandhaven, could never come too soon nor stay too long. When our story opens he had been at Sandhaven eight years, and Mrs. Lovel had known him intimately seven. Struck, in the first instance, by a sermon she had heard him deliver, she had left a card at the Rectory, and then they became acquainted. His wife was

living in those days, a poor feeble lady, who reclined all day on air cushions, and so hated noise that she could not bear to hear her husband speak. She died, and Mr. Lockfield seemed to mourn. That his grief was sincere need not be assumed; but Mrs. Lovel thought it sincere, wept with him and pitied him, and became his great friend.

When people heard that the little rector was constantly at Mrs. Lovel's house they got saying to one another, "This must end in marriage." A more absurd idea never entered the human mind. Mrs. Lovel was, no doubt, very fond of the little clergyman, and the little clergyman had a very great liking for Mrs. Lovel, but they never thought of marrying. There was no conceivable reason why they should have thought of such a thing. Mr. Lockfield was sufficiently well off; his living (presented to him by old Squire Andrews, of

Springfield Hall, a college friend) yielded him a good income. The Rectory was a snug house, with no other drawback to it than that it overlooked the churchyard. He was always welcome at Mrs. Lovel's house, and could enjoy it a very great deal more than were he its master. He liked her society because he knew her to be a very worthy woman, and because—but this is nothing—because she flattered him by the high opinion she had of his professional ability. Other members of his congregation did not value him so greatly; other members found his sermons thin, his sentiments familiar, his knowledge indifferent; naturally he enjoyed the company of a person who hung upon his words as if they contained celestial fire, who would not raise her finger until she had consulted him upon the propriety of raising it; who could quote passages from his sermons four Sundays old. It is impossible to say why Mrs.

Lovel should have esteemed this gentleman's mind so highly. Women are famous for the leniency of their criticism. How kindly they laugh at our poor jokes! how prettily they cry over our poor sermons! how tenderly they admire our very poor poetry! Don't they give that stupid physician his house and carriages? don't they give that North British preacher fame? don't they make Jones proud of his drivel, and send Smith's silly books into ten editions? Mrs. Lovel thought Mr. Lockfield a hard-working clergyman and a beautiful preacher. *Soit!* smaller men have been more admired.

I was speaking of a certain selfish love of routine that had been excited in Mrs. Lovel by her lonely life. When she read Mr. Malcolmson's letter she instantly saw that, by receiving her niece, she would be throwing her habits into disorder. Let it be here said, however, that before she put that letter in her pocket, she had made up

her mind to take her niece to live with her. The natural impulses of so honest a heart could not but be true. Yet, if I may so speak, she hid her resolution away even from herself while she speculated upon the consequences that might follow her reception of Jessie Marchmont. What ought she to do? She knew quite well. She had made up her mind; and still she asked herself what ought she to do? Of course she must see Mr. Lockfield and get his opinion and advice. Opinion and advice, when her resolution was already taken! But really, advice is only good advice when it agrees with your wishes. Mr. Lockfield might have made her uncomfortable by endeavouring to dissuade her from taking charge of her niece; but all the same, she would have written for her niece to be sent.

The poor old lady did not pass a very good night after the clergyman had left

her. The wind made dreadful noises outside the house, and her mind was greatly perturbed. She meant to write to Mr. Malcolmson first thing in the morning, and what tone was she to take? Had she better inform her niece through her niece's friend of the sort of conduct she expected from her, or write a wholesome, cordial, simple letter of promised welcome and love? She would see. How many letters did that honest soul mentally compose that night? She could not sleep a wink. What room should her niece have? what was her taste in the matter of food? when Sunday came and the church bells began to ring, and she should say to Jessie, "Will you put on your things, my dear, and accompany me to church?" would Jessie answer, "Thank you, I am a deist, and agree with Monsieur Voltaire in his views of religion, and prefer Tom Paine to Hannah More, and would rather stop at home and play the piano?"

Poor Mrs. Lovel had never been to France in her life, but had read a certain work upon French life and manners, written by an Irish convert, and had got from it very queer and original notions of Gallic morality. Hadn't Mr. Lockfield said that France was the hot-bed of infidelity? Didn't the Irish convert declare that in France there was no religion, no virtue, no truth, no honour, no legitimate children? True, the ingenious Hibernian referred more particularly to Paris and Parisian society, and Jessie had lived at La Force, which might be far away from the capital, which was something in favour of hope. Still, for her niece to have lived in a nation whose metropolis was the very wickedest place that ever was read or heard of—worse than Sodom and Gomorrah put together—worse than the world was before the Deluge drowned it—was dreadful to think of, and kept Mrs. Lovel for the greater part

of the night wide awake with mingled emotions of alarm and despair.

However, she rose at her accustomed hour next morning, and after breakfast wrote a letter to Mr. Malcolmson, which was in every possible sense different from the letters she had been rehearsing during the night: being short instead of long, and cordial instead of didactic, and gracious instead of stiff, and cheerful instead of foreboding.

"Give my love to my niece," wrote she, "and bid her come to me as soon as she can; and perhaps, sir, you will kindly let me know on what day I am to expect her, and whether she will travel alone or have a protector. There is a railway from London to C——y, and from C——y a coach runs to Sandhaven every Tuesday and Friday. I enclose a cheque for twenty pounds drawn upon my bankers in this town which should be honoured at sight, as the Perriwinkle

Banking Company is universally known. This money will enable Jessie to travel comfortably."

The letter written Mrs. Lovel gave it to Jane to post. "Don't put a penny head upon it," said she, "for the letter is to go to France; carefully inquire what the postage is, and see that they give you the right stamp. I know no truer sign of a vulgar mind than an underpaid letter."

CHAPTER IV.

JESSIE.

EXACTLY ten days after her letter to Mr. Malcolmson had been written and posted, Mrs. Lovel might have been found in her bedroom, standing before a looking-glass, and attiring herself for a walk. She was very pale, and her hands were so tremulous she could hardly tie her bonnet strings. Perhaps the cold made her shiver. It was certainly a bitter day, though wonderfully fine and brilliant; the trees in front of the house shook their iron boughs in the fresh breeze and filled the room with flickering sunlight.

It was just three by the clock on the bedroom mantelpiece.

Mrs. Lovel pulled a letter from her pocket, which to judge from its soiled aspect, must have been fingered a great number of times. "Your niece," said the postscript, will reach London by eleven o'clock, and C——y by a quarter past two."

"And if the coach is punctual," mentally added Mrs. Lovel, "she should be here by four."

Poor nervous old lady! how often had she read that postscript! how often had she put that mental addition to it! In ten days anticipation had made her haggard. The niece was not expected until four o'clock, and here was the aunt, at three, preparing to meet her! Why, dear lady, the inn at which the coach stops is not five minutes' walk from your house, and yet ever since ten o'clock—positively ever since breakfast-time—have you been pulling out

your watch to see if it was getting near the time for you to start!

In a large bonnet amply protected by a veil, a thick shawl, a fine muff, a black silk skirt, and a pair of goloshes over her boots —albeit the ground was perfectly hard and white and dry—Mrs. Lovel looked the complete picture of a well-preserved old-fashioned lady. She stood at her bedroom door a moment or two before quitting the chamber, to see that everything was neat and in its place, fit for her niece to behold. Yes, nothing could be more snug and tidy. She heard Jane in the room opposite and popped her head in. This was to be Jessie's bedroom.

"Is everything ready?" asked she.

"Everything, ma'am. Them white curtains make the room look wonderfully sweet, don't they, ma'am?"

But Mrs. Lovel was too nervous to be appreciative. She went downstairs and

drank a glass of wine, and fidgeted about the parlour, pushing a chair a little more into its place, twitching the table-cover, blowing an imaginary speck of dust off the mantelpiece, and performing a great variety of feats of a similar nature, until she believed that it was really time to be off; whereupon with a long, involuntary, tremulous sigh, she seized her muff and left the house.

The inn "The Three Tuns," where the coach stopped, was at the top of High Street. Slowly as Mrs. Lovel walked, she reached it full twenty minutes before the coach was due. Many were the salutations she had received on her way. Everybody knew her. Sailors grinned and touched their hats to her. Shopmen in white aprons and with pens behind their ears, bowed to her through their windows. Surely it needed but a few more people in the streets to make the old lady's passage from her

house to the inn a progress rather than a walk. As it happened, the streets were not absolutely deserted, because it was Saturday. There was quite a little knot of persons about the inn door when she reached it, waiting for the coach. The landlord on seeing her, stepped forward and pulled off his hat, and begged she would use his best parlour where there was a good fire; an invitation which she declined with a gracious smile, making at the same time many inquiries after Mrs. Landlord and the children.

She had not long to wait, for in about ten minutes after her arrival, the coach was seen bowling along the C——y road; and very soon it had halted opposite the inn, its horses smoking like steam-engines, and the people on the roof looking as red as apples. Mrs. Lovel bustled forward with a beating heart and intently surveyed the travellers as they alighted. First got out a

fat man; he was followed by Mr. McSwish, a Scotch schoolmaster at Sandhaven, and two little boys as yellow as custards, and looking pitifully scared and hungry. After these Mrs. Lovel, whose eyes threatened to desert their sockets, beheld a solemn, hook-nosed woman descend, who seized the fat man by the arm and walked him off.

"Good heaven!" thought Mrs. Lovel, "where's my niece? hasn't she come? Has she missed the coach? Whatever will she do alone!"

"Now then, miss, if *you* please: give us your hand and I'll help you out," said the guard to somebody in the coach.

Here it would appear that the somebody in the coach asked the guard a question; for looking around upon the assembled crowd, he called out: "Is there anybody here waiting for Miss Marchmont?"

"Yes, there is!" cried out Mrs. Lovel. "Her aunt's waiting, tell her."

A little gloved hand was put into the guard's, and a girl dressed in deep mourning came out of the coach. Mrs. Lovel ran forward.

"Are you Jessie Marchmont? are you my niece?" she exclaimed in a paroxysm of excitement and eagerness.

"Yes, I am Jessie Marchmont," answered the girl, in a sweet voice, and shyly.

"Give me a kiss then, my dear," cried the old lady, "and welcome to Sandhaven."

The thin crape veil was half raised and a pair of soft lips pressed upon Mrs. Lovel's cheek.

"Where's your luggage? have you much of it?"

"Beg parding, Mrs. Lovel, ma'am," said the landlord of the "Three Tuns," coming forward, "but if you'll leave the lady's lug-

gage to me, I'll see that you get it within half an hour."

"There's a kind man."

"I have only one box," said Jessie. "It has my aunt's address upon it."

"I'll know it, miss," answered the landlord.

"Take my arm, dear. Aren't you tired to death? we are very near home, scarcely ten minutes' walk, and a fly couldn't take us there quicker than our legs. Have you travelled alone?"

"A friend of Mr. Malcolmson accompanied me to London, and saw me into the train. I am not tired, dear aunt."

Dear aunt! the pretty words, so prettily spoken, took Mrs. Lovel immensely. "What a sweet voice she has!" thought she. "And her hair is gold-coloured, like Lavinia's." She turned her eyes askew upon her niece, and mastered, with wonderful rapidity, every detail of her dress. All was simple.

To be sure the child was in mourning; but still a lover of dress can make mourning a highly coquettish wear. The crape veil was pinned so much over the little bonnet that the old lady could hardly tell its fashion. But let her wait.

They walked quietly. Mrs. Lovel asked Jessie a few questions about the journey, about her age, and so forth; but said nothing of her father and mother; nothing, in short, of any importance. There were things she would not mention in the public streets. They gained the house, and when Mrs. Lovel said, "This is to be your home, my dear," Jessie looked up and exclaimed, "How pretty! how quiet! I shall be very happy here."

"I shall strive to make you very happy," said Mrs. Lovel, deeply pleased. She took the girl's hand, and so they walked through the garden.

Jane had been on the look-out for them

ever since missis had left the house. This will account for the door being flung open without knocker or bell being used. She dropped a curtsey as they entered. Jessie gave her a pleasant nod.

"I only keep one maid," said Mrs. Lovel, setting a good example to her niece by wiping her feet on the mat. "I find one servant quite enough to do my little work."

"Not so little neither," thought Jane, opening the parlour door.

"We used only to keep one," answered Jessie, following her aunt into the room. Here a small demonstration of feeling took place. Mrs. Lovel throwing down her muff and pulling off her veil, called out,

"I hope you will love me, niece, for your mother's sake, and think of my home as your own. You are welcome, very welcome here,

and I shall strive to do for you as if you were my own child."

Saying which she ran forward, caught hold of Jessie's hand, kissed her and burst into tears.

"I shall love you, I am sure I shall love you very much," answered Jessie, caressing her aunt, and speaking in a voice melodious as a dove's coo. "Your eyes are like poor mamma's, and your voice reminds me of her."

"Yes, we had the same expression," said Mrs. Lovel. "I treated Lavinia very badly —never answered the letter she wrote to me after she married your poor father. But I will make amends, if God will let me."

Then catching sight of Jane in the hall, "Jane," cried she, "is Miss Marchmont's bedroom ready?"

"Yes, ma'am, since the day before yesterday."

"Come, my child, come to your room;

and Jane, as soon as dinner is ready you can serve it, for I am sure my niece is faint after her long journey."

Whilst we wait for the ladies, let us indulge in a quiet laugh at old Mrs. Lovel—whom certainly we should not laugh at if we did not like—for allowing her mind to be afflicted by the absurd terrors respecting her niece that entered it after she received Mr. Malcolmson's letter. What! that meek, mourning-clad, golden-haired little figure, (we haven't seen her face yet) an infidel! that girl with a voice like a flute-sullen-tempered! a nice mistake your silly fears led you into, Mrs. Lovel! Not that the old lady deserves great blame. Wise people are apt to make little mistakes of this kind. Nay, don't you know wise people who have made far greater mistakes; who have suffered their minds to be prejudiced against their fellow-creatures before they have ever set eyes on them, and who have allowed

their prejudices to exist in defiance of the amiability, kindness, and attention of those who have so unconsciously and innocently provoked their dislike? You can see at all events that Mrs. Lovel is not wanting in sense and humanity by the prompt manner in which she lets fall her fears and misgivings and runs to meet and kiss and to offer her love to the girl who, if her aunt refuses to give her her love, has nobody in the world to love her.

Love her! look at her as she follows Mrs. Lovel into the parlour and stands a moment at the table glancing round upon the pictures and the other objects of interest of which Mrs. Lovel, in the language of the theatre managers, is the sole proprietor. She is a real little beauty—a blonde of a most enchanting type; blue eyed, red lipped, with pearly teeth and dimples round her mouth; as thoroughly an English-looking girl as Leech could draw, or George Eliot describe.

I am greatly taken by the way she wears her hair. Nature has supplied her very bountifully with "that loveliest feature of woman's beauty," as a poetical friend calls it; and the child has the trick of dressing it in a style surprisingly becoming. There is nothing of the loose—the dishevelled—the curling about it. The sun-coloured tresses are brushed smoothly from her fair young brow, and gathered into a bunch behind, where a comb —at which Mrs. Lovel had stared very hard for some time before she could remember that she herself had given it to Lavinia on her eighteenth birthday—kept the plain, neat coils in their place. Her head is small, but wonderfully well-shaped; her ears are like rose-tinted alabaster; her figure is very good, not too slight, the waist not too small, the chest broad.

"Come near the fire, Jessie," calls out Mrs. Lovel, in whose veins time has made the blood to flow languidly, and who there-

fore conceives that when she is cold all the world is so. Jessie goes to the fire and kneels upon the hearthrug, giving one hand to her aunt and holding up the other to the fire.

"What a beautiful rug," cries she, looking down upon the softness she kneels on. "And there's a pussy!" catching sight of the kitten coiled behind a hassock. She draws her hand gently from Mrs. Lovel's, catches up the kitten and nurses it, pressing the ball of fur and claws and whiskers against her cheek. It needs a young man's taste to appreciate the charming picture she makes, fondling and whispering to the kitten, whilst the firelight deepens the gold of her hair and her blue eyes are lighted by a child's happiness. Mrs. Lovel can't but admire.

"You are very pretty, Jessie," says she with grave candour; and then she longs to ask her questions about her mind, about her

religious views, about her education, about the society she kept in France. But this examination must be deferred until after dinner.

"They used to call me pretty at home," answers Jessie, putting the kitten down as tenderly as if it were a baby. "Poor papa always called me his little beauty."

And at the mention of poor papa's name a great sadness overcasts her face, her head droops, and she stares into the fire with eyes indescribably melancholy. But now Jane comes in to lay the cloth; and Mrs. Lovel rises, as is her wont, to help her. Presently, Jessie turns her big blue eyes away from the fire, sees how her aunt is employed, and says,

"Can't I go into the kitchen and bring up the plates? I am accustomed to helping in the kitchen, auntie. I have washed up when we have lost our servant, and papa

once told me I could make five pounds a year easily as a housemaid."

Jane makes a hideous face to prevent herself from bursting into a laugh.

"My dear," says Aunt Lovel, gravely, and with a little glitter of alarm in her eyes, "the work in this house is very light, and Jane can get through it all, and have her evenings to herself besides. I have told her if she finds the work heavier than usual, that I shall not mind hiring a charwoman once a week to assist."

"And mayn't I help her at all, aunt?"

"There is no need, my dear," answers Mrs. Lovel uneasily, wondering if it is the custom in France for young ladies to serve as housemaids in their papa's houses.

Jessie walks up to the picture of Mr. Lovel, and inspects it narrowly. Mrs. Lovel, if she has eyes to see and ears to hear, cannot fail to have observed already that she has here to deal with a very child-

like little personage, who out of the perfect innocence and candour of her unsophisticated soul, will say many things that are bound to strike the fastidious mind as queer, and the kindly mind as honest and pretty.

"Is this a relation of ours, aunt?" asks she, involuntarily frowning very sweetly at the swart, hollow-eyed visage that stares upon her from the canvas.

"My husband," cries Aunt Lovel quickly, terribly afraid from the expression on Jessie's face that she will say something frightfully embarrassing if she isn't prevented.

"Is he dead?" inquires Jessie.

"Yes, my child, before you were born."

Jessie looks solemn, eyes the picture afresh with a very doubtful expression about her mouth, and turns her back upon it. She remembers that her mamma used to say that Aunt Eliza married a madman; and the sunken cheeks and hollow optics of the portrait make her uneasy.

"That is the house where your mamma was born," says Mrs. Lovel, pointing to the picture over the door.

Jessie manifests unmistakable interest; goes to the door and stands upon tip-toe, but cannot see the picture well enough to please her. Whereupon she pushes forward a chair, jumps upon it with exquisite grace, and is instantly absorbed in contemplating the Suffolk home, about which her mamma had so often discoursed to her, perfectly unconscious that Mrs. Lovel is suffering unheard-of tortures, partly from the fear that Jessie will break her neck, and partly from her profound disapproval of the child's manœuvre. And indeed Jane very nearly succeeds in knocking her off the chair; for, finding the door ajar, and not guessing at the obstacle behind, she shoves the tray she is carrying against it, as the best of servants will, especially if the door is very handsomely grained. Down Jessie springs with

a laugh, while Mrs. Lovel utters a cry. Jane, for the moment, is under the impression that she has broken the door, and feels so faint that she is very nearly letting fall the tray, which contains, amongst other things, a leg of mutton and a jug of beer.

"Niece," says Mrs. Lovel, with just enough of asperity to illustrate her nervousness, "I don't think it is a very wise thing to stand upon chairs."

"I couldn't see the picture, aunt. I am not tall enough."

"Jane shall take it down to-morrow, and then you can have a good look at it."

Saying which the old lady seats herself opposite the roast mutton, and Jessie opposite the old lady; and grace being said (the recital of which Mrs. Lovel accompanies with a penetrating gaze at her niece), dinner begins.

CHAPTER V.

JESSIE'S EXAMINATION.

IT is six o'clock when they rise from the table. Mrs Lovel goes to the fire, which she is never weary of poking, and breaks a great lump of coal, which instantly fills the room with dancing light. Jessie takes the arm-chair facing her aunt's, and watches the countenance of Mr. Lovel, which winks and sniggers at her, and sometimes seems to leap out of the canvas, and sometimes seems to withdraw into the dense obscurity of the background, according as the fire-play grows vivid or languishes. But soon this unbe-

coming levity on the part of the pictured Lovel is sobered by the entrance of Jane bearing the lamp. Then the shutters are closed, and the curtains drawn; the cat creeps from under the sofa, followed by the kitten, and after chasing its tail for some moments in a thoughtful pursuit of a comfortable posture, settles herself close against Jessie's little feet. She, sweet child, who has fallen desperately in love with the kitten, takes the little thing upon her lap, and excites it into a tremendous purr.

Mrs. Lovel occupies her arm-chair; peculiarly hers, for long use has made its soft cushion and embracing arms accommodate themselves so distinctively to her shape that anybody may recognize a subtle and diverting likeness between them; with her feet upon a hassock, and her eyes fixed sometimes upon the fire, and sometimes upon her niece. She is rather sleepy. Late

dinners never agreed with her. So regular have her habits heretofore been that this single diversion from the routine of her life has disagreeably perplexed her mind with a confused sense of time. As she has just dined, how comes it that the sun isn't shining? It is six o'clock, tea-time; but she will get no tea for another hour. At nine o'clock she should have supper; but that night there will be no supper. Time is out of joint. She seems to feel that she has lived at an astonishing pace since breakfast, and is disposed to wonder which way the hours have rolled, whether they have made her younger or older since she left her bed.

"Do you think you will like to live in England after being used to France?" she asks, rubbing her eyes, and pushing her chair an inch or two away from the fire, that its somnific influence may not totally overcome her.

"I think so. But I love France very much. It is such a warm, sunny country, full of kind, polite people."

"But England is warm and sunny too in summer," says Aunt Lovel, "and if the people here aren't as polite as they are in France, they are quite as kind, and I am sure more honest."

"Are not the French honest, aunt?"

"Some of them are, I don't doubt. But you see they are not religious."

"Are the English?" asks Jessie.

"More religious than the French, unquestionably," says Aunt Lovel, with great emphasis.

"I don't know much about the English. I was born in India you know, auntie, but left when I was a wee bairn, because mamma was afraid the climate would kill me. Papa remained in Bombay, and mamma came to England, and lived at Sydenham, which is near London, until I was eight

years old. Then papa, who had only seen us twice in all that time, came home a third time, and we went to Boulogne. There we lived until papa left India for good, and took us to La Force, where poor mamma died, just a year after we had settled there."

"Then you are more English than French?" says Aunt Lovel, shaking her head doubtfully.

"Indeed I am not!" exclaims Jessie cheerfully. "I am thoroughly English. But I shall always love the French."

"But you'll allow, my child, that they are nearly all atheists in that country?"

"What's that, aunt?"

Mrs. Lovel cannot quite make up her mind to believe that Jessie's ignorance is genuine.

"I cannot explain," says she in a solemn voice. "It's too awful."

"Then it can't be true?"

"But I'll show you books that say it's true."

"But why should books be true? they're written by men, and men are not always true, papa used to say."

This rhetoric seems to strike Mrs. Lovel as rather sanguinary, and she looks mildly shocked.

"The book I mean," says she, "was written by an Irish clergyman. He was a papist before the light he had long prayed for came to him, had lived in Paris, and knelt to graven images, and knew more about France and Frenchmen and their religion than anybody in that nation."

"And does he speak ill of the Catholics?"

"My dear, he wants words to express his horror."

"Then he ought to be ashamed of himself," cries Jessie, with a little colour in her cheek, and a little sparkle in her eyes.

"Ashamed, eh? what's that?" exclaims Mrs. Lovel.

"I think it is wicked, downright wicked, for anybody to speak ill of the people he lived amongst, and was one of. If a person changes his opinions, that is no reason why he should abuse those who retain the views he himself had. I have lived among Catholics, and know them to be as honest, and gentle, and good, as any persons can be; and I don't like to hear anything said against them."

Mrs. Lovel is quite pale. A tremendous question falters upon her tongue; she has scarce nerve enough to articulate, so apprehensive is she of the answer.

"Are—ah! are you a—hey!—Catholic?" she gasps at last.

"No," answers Jessie, "I am a Protestant, like papa and mamma. And what are *you*, aunt?"

The old lady's emotions are very min-

gled. She is enormously relieved to learn that Jessie is not a member of the communion against which she (the old lady) is traditionally prejudiced; but, on the other hand, she is not a little scandalized by being asked *her* religion.

"Could you doubt for a moment, niece, that I am a churchwoman?"

"Is a churchwoman a Protestant?" inquires Jessie?

"*I am,*" says Mrs. Lovel. That "I am" is really magnificent, and Jessie seems overcome. She swings her foot, and looks at the clock, and then round the room, as a child might, in search of something to play with.

Rap, tap—tap! cries the little sharp-voiced knocker in the hall. Jane comes heavily up the kitchen stairs, and fills the silence with a sense of large feet. The door is opened, and in steps the Reverend John Lockfield.

"I could not pass your door without calling to inquire after your niece," says the very little gentleman, shaking Mrs. Lovel's hand and looking rosily at Jessie.

Mrs. Lovel introduces him to the young lady, with a surprising air of dignity and ease. Mr. Lockfield steps over to Miss Marchmont, makes her a bow, and takes a chair near her. Jessie examines him with an amused face. She has never seen so little a man before in her life—not even in France, where small men are not rare. However, it is quite plain that Mr. Lockfield is no stranger to ladies' society. He rubs his white hands, smiles at the fire, and enters easily into a gay chat with the unaffected little maiden by his side.

Mrs. Lovel seems to listen to the clergyman's questions about the state of the road between C——y and Sandhaven, about the Protestant church at La Force, and other profound matters, but is in reality pondering

deeply over Jessie's advocacy of the Catholics.

"Do you like France?" asks Mr. Lockfield.

"She loves it," says Mrs. Lovel.

"That is true," observes Jessie.

"A wonderful nation!" cries Mr. Lockfield, with diminutive enthusiasm. "And yet somehow, not so wonderful as England."

"Nor so virtuous!" says Mrs. Lovel.

"Nor so virtuous, as you say, ma'am." You will observe that Mr. Lockfield frequently addresses Mrs. Lovel as "ma'am."

"I don't understand what you mean," says Jessie, pouting; "why should the English be more wonderful and more virtuous than the French?"

"Because they're Protestants!" whips out Mrs. Lovel, hardly giving Jessie time to end her sentence.

"That is no doubt one reason," observes

Mr. Lockfield. "In the history of the world," adds he in his most extensive manner, "the Protestants have always marched first in the army of civilization."

"But where did they march before they were Protestants?" asks Jessie.

Mr. Lockfield is puzzled: but looks towards Mrs. Lovel with a smile that implies, "You know how *I* could answer this piece of absurdity; but I'll not interrupt you." On the other hand Mrs. Lovel looks at him, expecting him to speak. So there is a silence, which Mr. Lockfield presently breaks by asking Jessie if she can speak French.

"Oh, yes."

"A useful language to know. I learned it once, but never could get the pronunciation."

"It has always appeared to me to be no better than gestures and grimaces," says Aunt Lovel, whose British bile rises to

every compliment that is paid to wooden shoes and frogs.

"It is a beautiful language," says Jessie, "not so rich as the Italian, but quite as soft. You should hear it spoken by actors at the theatres abroad. When they make love and sink their voices, it thrills you. Their compliments are so fine, and they have such pretty words—so endearing!"

"And used you to attend the French theatres?" asks Mrs. Lovel, with an expression on her face that was unutterably like a burst of tears.

"There was a theatre at Boulogne mamma used to take me to, where Paris actors performed sometimes."

"And you went?"

"Sometimes."

Mrs. Lovel pulls out her spectacles, perches them on her nose, and stares at Mr. Lockfield. Observing that he is expected to say something, Mr. Lockfield pulls his shirt-cuff out of his coat-sleeve, and remarks:

"I should not consider a French theatre a good place to take a daughter of mine to."

"I would burn them down and the actors in them," cries Mrs. Lovel, fiendishly. "Used you to read French novels, niece?"

"Mamma said they were not nice books, so I never cared to read them."

Mr. Lockfield glances at Mrs. Lovel, hopefully; but the old lady is very stony. She is thinking that had she had the least idea that Lavinia took her daughter to witness French plays, she would never have given herself the trouble to regret that she had not answered her letter.

"I suppose," says Mr. Lockfield, who is sympathetically regarding Jessie's pouting underlip, and wishes to make the conversation cheerful, "that society in France is very sprightly and gay? They dance a good deal there, I believe, and are devoted to music."

"We knew very few people at La Force, and they were chiefly English," answers Jessie, whose thoughts flow dreamily away to the past, and before whose mental eye is depictured a little French town, with a market-place before a church with a high steeple, where women in great caps and long earrings and picturesque shawls, are seated at stalls, and with a long street stocked with odd-looking shops, adown which marches a regiment of red-trousered soldiers, to the thunder of drums, and the melodious shrilling of bugles. These sights had composed her last memory of La Force.

"Do you say, my dear, that you didn't mix in French society?" asks Aunt Lovel, breaking in upon this memory-picture with true Briton-like impertinence.

> "And is there then no earthly place,
> Where we can rest in dreams Elysian,
> Without some curst round English face,
> Popping up near to break the vision?"

"No, I don't think we knew more than three French families at La Force."

Again Mr. Lockfield's eyes twinkle hopefully at Mrs. Lovel.

"And where were you educated, my child?" asks the old lady.

"I went to a day-school at Boulogne for two years."

"A French school?"

"Yes, aunt."

"Papists?"

"They were Roman Catholics."

"But your mamma took you to church, I hope, and didn't let you fast unnecessarily?"

"Much fasting *is* unnecessary," says Mr. Lockfield, "and abstinence, too. I possess the character of a man who can respect religious prejudices, but—I cannot consider fish and eggs mortifying—in a spiritual sense; they are mortifying only when you expect better fare."

Only his own gratification rewarded this joke.

"But soup maigre is mortifying," says Jessie.

"What's that?" asks Mrs. Lovel, anxiously.

"Vegetable water," replies the clergyman. "Make your mind easy, ma'am; we eat thinner soup sometimes in England."

"But this soup-mayger is a Popish custom. Did they make you eat it, Jessie?"

"Yes."

"They had no right. I should have emptied it under the table."

"And been sentenced to a hundred lines of Télémaque for your Protestant zeal," says the clergyman, with a loud laugh.

"My schooling," observes Jessie, "would have been more expensive had I eaten meat every day. On Fridays and Saturdays I found eggs and soup quite enough for me."

This brief explanation tells a little story of poverty, which instantly saddens Mrs. Lovel, and makes her forget all about the Pope and the soup. So, then, *she* had plenty when Lavinia could not afford to pay for a meat dinner for her child every day. Poor Lavinia! poor sister!

"Aunt," says Jessie, who doesn't know that she has melted the old lady's heart, and is beginning to rebel against this long cross-examination before Mr. Lockfield, "may I go and unpack my trunk?"

"Certainly," answers Mrs. Lovel, graciously. "But won't you wait until the morning? aren't you very tired? Besides you'll not be able to see by candle-light."

Jessie says that she will be able to see very well; whereupon Mrs. Lovel pulls the bell, bids Jane bring a candle, and light Miss Marchmont to her bedroom.

"Upon my word, Mrs. Lovel," says Mr. Lockfield to the old lady, when Jessie has

gone, "I think you have reason to be proud of your niece. A more elegant little creature I never set eyes on. It makes me feel twenty years younger to meet with such a pair of blue eyes."

"She has the family look," says Mrs. Lovel, complacently. "Her mother had blue eyes, and so had her grandmother."

Mr. Lockfield turns to take a look at the picture of Mrs. Lovel's mamma, over the sofa, and says, "Yes, yes, I trace a resemblance."

"Jessie has the family nose," observes Mrs. Lovel.

"Though her papa put it out of joint," says Mr. Lockfield, with a laugh.

Mrs. Lovel has not a quick intelligence in the matter of jokes. She ponders over Mr. Lockfield's remark for some moments, but is unable to master the point.

"The family face," says she, "is a very small matter compared with the family

mind. Mr. Lockfield, do you know I rather fear that my niece has a leaning to Roman Catholicism."

"I should say not," answers Mr. Lockfield.

"But you didn't hear her speak up against me in favour of the Papists."

"Is she a Protestant or what?"

"She says she is a Protestant."

"That should satisfy you."

"But suppose she's a Catholic at heart?"

"You will soon be able to find out."

"Yes, but if she discovers that I am no friend to that religion, she may conceal her sentiments from me."

"Watch her."

"Of course," says Mrs. Lovel, not finding so much consolation in Mr. Lockfield's rejoinders as she expected, and thereupon resolving to say something consoling herself, "of course it is only to be expected that she should have a fancy for the people she

has lived amongst, and love the country in which her parents are buried. Association lays a very strong hand on young people's minds. There was a time when I thought I could never bear to live anywhere but in my native county, and now I couldn't bear to live anywhere but at Sandhaven."

"Depend upon it, Mrs. Lovel, your niece is prejudiced in favour of the Roman Catholics, *not* for the sake of the religion, but for the sake of the people who believe in it. I would not chide her. I like to see young people with large sympathies. Whatever may be our opinion of the Catholic faith, as a faith, there can be no question that there are a great number of worthy, kind, and virtuous persons among the Catholics. All men ought to be liberal in their creeds. For my part," says he, sinking his voice, "I would rather have your niece sympathize with the Catholics than with the Dissenters."

"I don't know," answers Mrs. Lovel, doubtfully; "the Dissenters keep the commandments."

"Don't say that, Mrs. Lovel!" cries the little man, excitedly; "don't say that, ma'am; even Churchmen don't keep the commandments."

"Do the Dissenters believe in graven images?" asks Mrs. Lovel, shaking her black silk skirt.

"They believe in worse."

"Worse, Mr. Lockfield!"

"They believe in each other, ma'am."

"Do they hide the Bible away from the people—hey?"

"No; it may lie open in safety among them: they can scarcely read."

"I am surprised at your prejudices."

"I wonder at your advocacy, Mrs. Lovel. As a member of the Established Church, it is your business to give no quarter to the enemies of that Church."

"You just now said——"

"Yes, ma'am, yes; I just now said that all men ought to be liberal in their creeds, but when we talk of the Dissenters we don't think of religion. When we talk of men we don't think of monkeys."

"I am no Dissenter, sir; but I am sorry for the Dissenters. We make them pay for our church, and give them nothing but abuse for their support. As for the——"

But at this juncture Jessie opens the door.

"Auntie, I have brought you these little things from La Force," she says, and goes up to the old lady, kneels on the skin, and places in her lap:

1. A lace collar.

2. A pincushion, in the shape of a doll, habited like a *Sœur de Charité.*

3. A box of bonbons, with a finely-painted lid, representing a swain in knee

breeches making love to a nymph in red stockings; and

4. A snuff-box.

"I thought you might take snuff," says Jessie; "it's a good deal used in France."

Mr. Lockfield pulls out his pocketh and-kerchief, and shakes under the application of it.

"Give me a kiss, child, for thinking of me," says Mrs. Lovel. "I don't take snuff, but I'll keep the box for your sake. What have we here?" taking up the *Sœur de Charité*, and eyeing it grimly.

Jessie explains.

"For pins!" cries the old lady. "A queer fancy, indeed!" and she puts it aside.

Mr. Lockfield examines it. The effect produced by the attentive inspection of this Catholic toy by the rosy-cheeked clergyman is sufficiently droll. So Gilray depictured George III. holding Napoleon in

his hand, and examining the pigmy through a glass.

"This is good lace," says Mrs. Lovel, putting the collar close to her nose.

"How prettily they manufacture those sweetmeat boxes abroad," remarks Mr. Lockfield, unconsciously fondling the sister of charity on his knee.

Jessie opens the box and exhibits some wonderfully-coloured sugar-plums. Mr. Lockfield takes one; Mrs. Lovel takes another. They have quite forgotten the Dissenters, and regard each other with smiles.

"I'll go and finish my unpacking," says Jessie.

Here Mr. Lockfield says he must be making his way homewards, and gives the sister of charity to Mrs. Lovel, who hastily places it on the mantelpiece. She tells him they will be drinking tea very shortly, and presses him to remain, but he declines, shakes hands, bows, and goes away.

"What a little man," says Jessie.

"A very good man, my dear; a sound Churchman."

"Does he preach well?"

"Beautifully. You shall hear him to-morrow."

As Aunt Lovel says this, she feels that it would not surprise her if Jessie answered, "Thanks, I never go to church;" but Jessie makes no such unbecoming remark; she merely gives Mrs. Lovel a smile, and goes upstairs.

CHAPTER VI.

SUNDAY AT AUNT LOVEL'S.

JESSIE woke early next morning, and thought she was in her bedroom at La Force. She peeped round her, and saw the wintry sunshine sparkling upon the unfamiliar paper on the wall and in the panels of the time-polished wardrobe, and remembered where she was, and that La Force was a thing of the past. Realities are never more real than when they confront us on our first waking. For some time Jessie lay quiet and tearful, thinking of her dear papa, who was drowned but a few weeks ago, and of her mother's

grave in the cemetery, where she had seen her father cry many a time, and of the little French town, with its red-bricked, shining-windowed convent, and the old diligence rattling down its long streets, and the bloused peasants reaping in the sunny fields. Was Sandhaven like La Force? If so, she would love it.

She stole out of bed and went to the window and peeped out. Beneath her was a garden neatly ordered, and not vacant of shrubbery, and all the way down on the right were high bare trees, which marked the course of the lane. Opposite was a field, and at the top of the field a row of chimney-pots, which illustrated the existence of a nest of small cottages hidden behind. There was a thin frost upon the ground, and a rose-coloured haze hung over the field. No sound broke the stillness, albeit the High Street was visible from Jessie's window, and the backs of some of

the fat, gable-peaked houses that composed it.

She was soon dressed, and went downstairs. She entered the parlour, and found Jane laying the cloth for breakfast. She asked for her aunt, and Jane told her that Mrs Lovel would be down by breakfast-time; that was, in half an hour, so Jessie, not knowing how to get rid of that half-hour, returned to her room for her cloak, the hood of which she threw over her sunny head, and left the house.

She knew something of gardening, and peered about her to see what promise the ground offered for summer. The stock of roots and shrubs was not very abundant, but Jessie saw that a very pretty use might be made of her aunt's plot of land, and could she have seen a rake, would have set to work forthwith to smooth the walks and beds.

She looked at the house, and owned that it was prettier than her home at La Force.

Seen in the early sunlight, the cottage certainly did present a most cosy and secure aspect. It was double-fronted; that was Jessie's room to the right of the door; the fire blazing in the parlour, deepened the crimson of the curtains; outside the sun sparkled in the window-panes, and threw a hospitable ruddy smile over the neat exterior.

Jessie went to the gate and looked down the lane. Nothing living was to be seen save a few sparrows, who seemed to be fighting for the privilege of breakfasting off an old shoe. There were deep ruts in the lane, which the keen air had hardened into iron. Jessie would have enjoyed a run, but she did not like to leave the garden for fear of losing her way. She closed the gate, and her fingers itching for employment, she approached an aged pear-tree sprawling against the wall, and pulled away the tindery cord that was supposed to keep

the branches in their place. She remembered that she had some string in her bedroom, and went to fetch it. Now behold her engrossed in the labour of binding the venerable branches to the old nails. Image her sweet child-face framed in the warmly-lined hood; the sunlight just catching the edge of gold-coloured hair upon her forehead, and brightening it into a delicate yellow; her large blue eyes made solemn by the engrossing nature of her occupation; her hand moving about the wall, like a flake of snow lovingly tossed by the breeze. How could nervous Aunt Lovel have the conscience to suggest that she might be more French than English? A purer, sweeter specimen of an English blonde than Jessie never lived.

She had been at this work some time when she was suddenly arrested by the sound of a hand thumping upon a window. She looked around. There was Aunt Lovel

at the parlour window beckoning to her and talking, as she could see by the movement of the old lady's mouth, though she could hear nothing. Jessie thought that breakfast was ready, kissed her hand with a nod, to intimate that she would enter speedily, and lingered to finish tying a knot.

Breakfast was not ready. Mrs. Lovel stood before the fire, her hands behind her.

"Good-morning, aunt," said Jessie, going up to Mrs. Lovel and kissing her.

"Good-morning, niece," responded Mrs. Lovel, with a very embarrassed face. Jessie had seen that look in her aunt the night before when she had spoken in defence of the Catholics, and suspected that it betokened concern of a nature more or less distressing. Had she done anything to annoy her aunt? She had left her cloak in the hall—had that vexed her?

"My dear," said the old lady, "what were you doing in the garden?"

"I was fastening the branches of a pear-tree to the wall. All the string is broken."

"On the Sabbath morning!"

What a deep reproach those words vehicled!

"Have I done any harm, aunt?"

"Harm, my child! what greater harm can you do than breaking the Sabbath?"

Jessie could not understand.

"What greater harm could I do?" she repeated, amazed.

"Have you forgotten the Commandments, Jessie?" asked Mrs. Lovel, sinking her tone of reproach into a lamentably sad key.

"No; but there is nothing in the Commandments against my fastening a pear-tree to a wall."

"'Remember that thou keep holy'—oh,

Jessie! this all comes from your having been taught in a Catholic school!"

Jessie pouted. Her pouts were so delicious that I am bound to record every one of them.

"In England," said she, "mayn't you do anything at all on Sundays?"

"No work of any kind—neither in England nor anywhere else. The Sabbath is set aside for prayer and meditation."

"I thought—I thought," exclaimed Jessie, with a shake in her lower notes, "that you would be pleased to see your pear-trees with new strings."

"There are six days in the week when you may put new strings to the pear-trees," said Mrs. Lovel.

"I am very sorry, aunt. I didn't think you would be angry. I used to water my flowers and attend to the garden at La Force on Sundays as well as week days. Nobody

told me it was wicked. Had it been wicked I am sure papa would have said so."

"It *is* wicked," said Aunt Lovel, emphatically, "on Sundays."

"I shall know for the future," answered Jessie, meekly hoping that she wouldn't cry.

"I don't say *you* have acted wickedly," exclaimed Mrs. Lovel, greatly mollified by Jessie's submission, and touched by the plaintive expression in her face. "You have never been taught to consider breaking the Sabbath sinful, and are therefore to be forgiven. But it would be horridly wicked in people who knew better."

Here Jane came in with the ham and eggs, and the subject was dropped. "It all comes from living in France and eating soup mayger," thought Mrs. Lovel with a sigh. Jessie strove hard to view the matter from Mrs. Lovel's standpoint, but failed to see her sin. There was, however, nothing

mutinous in her speculations. She was grieved to have vexed her aunt, that was all. Before breakfast was over, Mrs. Lovel had regained her composure, and Jessie forgotten her evil-doing. There was, nevertheless, observable in Mrs. Lovel's demeanour and conversation a certain severity which Jessie had not before noticed. Both her moral and physical being were, so to speak, starched, as if they had come home from the wash the night before, and were put on that morning like sundry other articles out of the same basket. There was a constraint, a slowness, a coldness, a harshness, difficult to describe, but easily understood by you who know how solemn and subduing and damping and chilling is the obligation imposed by the seventh day of the week on *some* natures. Jessie could not help noticing how harshly her aunt's black silk gown rustled; how fixed and impracticable her cap seemed; how unbending her

mittens. Her conversation was peculiarly sober; her voice pitched in one key. After breakfast, she took a book, gilt-edged, bound in morocco,—and seemed to read. Jessie went to the window and looked out. In spite of what her aunt had said she could not help casting longing looks at the sprawling trees against the garden wall, and the walks which cried aloud for the rake, and wondered and wondered again that Mrs. Lovel should think it a sin to tie a piece of string round the branch of a pear-tree on Sundays.

By-and-by, Mrs. Lovel told her that she would find some books—"suitable for Sunday reading," says the old lady, significantly—in the adjoining room. Jessie jumped up and went to seek the volumes recommended. They stood in a bookcase in a room half the size of the parlour—a room that would have done very well for a study had there been anybody studious enough in the

house to put it to that use. The window overlooked some meadows at the back which ran right away to the edge of the cliff.

Jessie turned over the books and found them dull enough. There were ecclesiastical histories, memoirs of obscure clergymen, negro missionaries and so forth, several volumes of hymns and sermons, the complete works of Fuller, several loose numbers of a Church of England Society's reports —a collection rather godly than diverting. But ah! up in a corner what did Jessie espy but a little pile of green-coloured books, which, on taking them down she discovered to be—Novels!! Positively five volumes of the railway library—Bulwer, Cooper, Miss Austen, Dumas, and Mr. Godwin.

The author of "Devereux" was greatly admired by Jessie's papa; and as Jessie had never read "Devereux" she carried it

into the next room, little dreaming that she would be sinning more unpardonably in her aunt's sight by reading that story on a Sunday morning than by putting new strings to old pear-trees.

"Well, my dear," said Mrs. Lovel, looking up from her morocco-bound volume, "have you found a book to please you?"

"I think so, aunt. It is called 'Devereux,' and it's written by an author whom papa used to call a great man."

"Called what?" cried Mrs. Lovel, staring very hard at the book in Jessie's hand.

"'Devereux,'" answered Jessie, reading the title-page, "by Sir Edward Lytton Bulwer Lytton, Bart., M.P."

"Why, it's a novel!"

"Yes, I know it is, aunt."

"And do you mean to say you're going to read a novel on Sunday morning?"

Jessie hung her head. She saw that she had made a mistake.

"Put it down! put it away!" cried the old lady. "Surely, surely your poor mamma never allowed you to read novels on Sunday!"

"I forget," said Jessie.

"Forget, niece! why, I hope you don't mean to imply, by *that*, that she did?"

"I won't read it if it is wrong."

"But though I know France to be a depraved nation," exclaimed Mrs. Lovel, "it is impossible to suppose that they are so utterly lost in that country as to read novels on Sundays! Why, the very best of such books are the worst of reading even on week-days—let alone the Sabbath. What is the name of that novel? 'Deveroo?' Go, my child, and put it where you found it, and never, never do such a thing again as to take up a novel on Sunday."

Away went Jessie with a rather choking sensation in her throat, replaced the novel and returned.

"Oh aunt!" cried she, standing at the table, and looking at the old lady with the most mournful blue eyes in the world: "I am afraid I shall make you hate me, for everything I do is wrong."

"Nay, nay," replied Mrs. Lovel, shocked by the strong expression, hate; "it is the fault of your education, not of your heart, my child. It is my duty to act towards you as a mother, and I should be sadly failing in that duty if I neglected to impress upon you that Sunday is a holy day, to be strictly, piously and reverently observed. Sit down whilst I read you what the author of this book says on the Sabbath."

And after a preliminary cough she, in a nasal and high-pitched voice which sank at every period with the regular subsidence of waves, read two pages of very just and proper observations respecting the observance of Sunday, and the discipline to which we should subject our behaviour on that day.

When she had ended she looked at the clock, put the book down and said it was time to get ready for church.

Jessie might have noticed how attentively Mrs. Lovel examined her when they met, dressed for church, in the parlour. There was, however, nothing for taste the most fastidious to take alarm at. Her deep mourning did no injury to her beauty. On the contrary, she looked all the more white and fresh and lovely for her sombre dress and black bonnet.

"Mrs. Malcolmson gave me this bonnet," said she, stealing a peep at herself in the glass. "She made it herself."

"It is very well—a little too small, perhaps," answered Mrs. Lovel, taking a look at her own bonnet, which Jessie might have told her was a little too large.

"I ought to explain," remarked the old lady, as they left the house, "how I came by those novels. It has been on my mind

since I spoke to you; and it is quite fair you should wonder I have such books in my house when I condemn them and their like so warmly. The fact is, I *had* to buy them. I went to a sale where I heard there was a collection of volumes to be sold, hoping to get some books fit to give to the library of the Free School. A parcel of books was put up and I bid for them. When they were sent home I found those novels among them. I put them aside, and should have forgotten I had them but for you."

This explanation appeared to afford her great relief.

They were now in the High Street. The church bells were pealing, and many people were abroad on their way to church. Jessie was struck by the old-fashioned aspect of the groups, and once laughed outright at a young lady whose pea-green silk fitted her like a sack, and whose head was cased in a straw bonnet, the like of which was never seen by mortal eyes.

"How short the men's trousers are," she whispered to her aunt, "and how stumpy they all look about the feet!"

"They are as God made them," answered Mrs. Lovel. "Never judge by outsides."

"But in France," said Jessie, "the people on Sundays have all such a gay, neat air. Here they look as if they had the toothache, and had been in too great pain to care how they dressed."

Mrs. Lovel made no reply to this, the truth being, she was too much occupied in returning the salutations of the people who bowed to her as if she were her majesty, to heed Jessie's prattle. So they made their way slowly to St. Mary's Church, Jessie gazing about her, admiring the fat, well-looking little houses, and wondering at the people and their attire. She, of course, was a good deal stared at. Her beauty, indeed, was sufficiently smiting to ensure her plenty of attention; but apart from

this, the perfect fit of her dress, the real grace of her figure, made the people gaze and whisper. In that little town everybody knew everybody—by sight I mean: don't suppose that everybody spoke to everybody. Do you, can you, suppose that the chemist's daughter would know Miss Fishmonger? that Miss Fishmonger, upon whose counters even turbot and salmon were to be seen in their season, would know the lady who kept the red herring shop in Cliff Street? that Miss Needle, the draper's daughter, would know Mrs. Cavendish, the tobacconist's wife?—I say in that little town everybody knew everybody by sight, and therefore a stranger like Jessie was sure to excite interest and gossip.

As she entered the church and followed Mrs. Lovel into her pew, people quite embarrassed her by the way they stared. Poor Mrs. Lovel was not a little nervous; would Jessie know what to do? The girl was,

indeed, a Protestant; but was the Protestant religion celebrated in France in the same way that it was here? Was not a little Papistry bound to leak into a faith that floated on the great ocean of Romanism? hey? suppose Jessie should cross herself? Mrs. Lovel got her elbow clear of her shawl ready to nudge her should she make a mistake. Then the organ played and the service began.

It is pleasant to record that the old lady was most agreeably disappointed in her expectations of her niece's conduct. Jessie, throughout the service, not only did exactly as the rest of the congregation did, but was singularly attentive and prayerful, which the rest of the congregation were not. How could the poor little thing listen to the familiar words which she had so often heard by her dear father's side, and not be moved? When the clergyman read: "That it may please Thee to defend and provide for the

fatherless children and widows, and all that are desolate and oppressed," she pulled her veil over her face, to hide her tears. Mrs. Lovel heard her light sob, took her hand, and pressed it. "She is a dear good girl," thought the old lady, "and I must never be angry with her, never."

Presently Mr. Lockfield mounted the pulpit; there was a rustling as of a sound of wind in all the pews, as the people composed themselves to hear; and then Mr. Lockfield began. Well, I don't suppose he preached a poorer sermon than you have sometimes had from your own esteemed rector. Homer nods occasionally. Even bishops are sometimes dull. Can you expect a man *always* to be brilliant, and touching, and polished? More might have been made of Mr. Lockfield's matter had Mr. Lockfield had a larger person to have made more of his matter with. But how can you expect eloquence to derive any additional force from the de-

clamation of a man so diminutive that he has to stand upon a stool in the pulpit that his congregation may see him? Most people know what point and colour and fervour a powerful voice will lend to the very tritest of platitudes; how a muscular arm will enforce a truth which, left to itself, would fall dead upon the sleepy listener; how gesticulation and articulation and perspiration will procure a muff—yes, sir, a *muff!*—the praise of eloquence.

Jessie listened very closely at the beginning of the sermon, but soon got tired, and began to look about her. First she examined the church. Had she had any architectural prejudices, she would hardly have been captivated. The pavement was of bluish-gray flag-stones; through the centre ran a row of arches, intolerably rude, supported by massive pillars standing in the pews. Above was the black skeleton of the roof—the great oaken beams—the dust-

darkened framework. The font was ugly enough to have justified any baby in screaming. Around the inside of the porch was a stone bench, on which, Jessie saw, were seated a little row of attentive labouring folk, the sunshine streaming upon them.

She then fell to surveying the congregation. There was a great uniformity in their variety. The women seemed decorous enough; but the men were restless, turned about in their seats, poked their heads into the corners of the pews in search of pillows, and now and then a strong Sabbath yawn reverberated through the building, which would be sometimes followed by a child asking a question in a loud and natural voice.

Not twenty pews from Mrs. Lovel's pew, and on a line with it, was another pew, furnished with crimson cushions. Here sate a young man. Jessie would not have heeded him more than the others around him had

he not obtruded himself upon her attention by the fixed and obstinate gaze he honoured her with. She looked at him once or twice, and saw that he had fair hair, thin whiskers, resembling Turkish tobacco, which you must know is of a pleasing, pale yellow colour, broad shoulders, and a rather thick neck. Her observation was limited to these details, for when she had mastered so much she did not look again, but contrived presently to turn her shoulder a little way round, so that, let the young gentleman stare as he might, he could not see much more of her than the back of her head.

Mr. Lockfield's sermon was over by a quarter to one, and he could hardly have considered the alacrity with which the congregation poured into the keen, breezy sunshine a compliment. Mrs. Lovel remained seated until the crowd that had entangled itself in the porch should have thinned. The young gentleman in the red-cushioned

pew also waited. Now that the sermon was over, the old lady was privileged to use her eyes, and she speedily became conscious of the very fixed regard the afore-mentioned young gentleman was bestowing on her niece. She was made nervous at once, rose hurriedly, and told Jessie that they could be leaving now. Out they went—followed by the young gentleman. However, he did not pursue them farther than the porch. He waited here, and in a few minutes was joined by no less a personage than Mr. Lockfield. Him, the young gentleman immediately fell to plying with questions, nodding and pointing, amid his eager inquiries, in the direction of Mrs. Lovel and Jessie.

But our business is with the ladies.

"My dear," said Mrs. Lovel, after they had been walking a few minutes, "did you observe that young gentleman in the pew with the red cushions?"

"Yes. He stared very hard at me, and I think him rude."

"He ought to have known better. I have never been introduced to him; but he is very rich, and, young as he is, has a beautiful house three quarters of a mile from here."

"What is his name?"

"Peter Andrews. His father died two years ago, and Peter, who is the only son, came into all the property. Mr. Lockfield knows him intimately. Indeed, the living of St. Mary's is in his gift. My dear, do you just mind turning your head to see if he is following us?"

Jessie looked back, but could not see him.

"How did you like the sermon?" inquired the old lady, much relieved by Jessie's reply that Mr. Andrews was out of sight.

"Pretty well—not very much, aunt."

"I thought it very excellent. I must say I consider Mr. Lockfield preaches very finely."

"I wish you could take me to the sea," said Jessie, who was too well satisfied to be in the bright sunshine, to remain angry with Mr. Lockfield for having kept her so long out of it.

"Certainly. We shall have plenty of time."

They walked towards, and soon gained, the cliffs. Jessie was delighted with the view. There was just enough wind to keep the water dancing; the sunshine streamed upon the waves and silvered them. Over head was a cloudless blue sky. The sun turned the chalk cliffs into a dazzling whiteness; and down, far beneath them, the breakers churned upon the brown sand and felt along the rude, weed-covered piles of the jetty with fingers soft as a blind man's. A steamer upon the horizon was pouring its

black volume of smoke into the ether. Jessie looked at it earnestly.

"Do you think that steam-boat is going to France, aunt?"

"How should I know, my child?"

"Where is France?"

"Somewhere yonder," answered the old lady, pointing with a vague finger across the sea.

"I wish I had wings," said Jessie, after a pause. "I should like to fly across to France."

"You would soon fly back again to England. There's no country in the world like it."

"You will never get me to think that England is a finer country than France," said Jessie, her voice sinking, and her eyes growing dreamy, as she continued to gaze in the direction Mrs. Lovel had pointed to; and then bethinking her that her aunt might consider the remark ungracious, she

turned impulsively and exclaimed, "But you are very good to me, and I shall soon learn to love England for your sake."

"Thank you, my child. I ought to tell you now that I was very much pleased with your behaviour in church. I saw Mr. Lockfield watching you; and I am sure if all the rest of the congregation were as devout as you, he would have little need to complain."

Jessie's eyes shone. She was delighted to have pleased her aunt. The blunders she had made that morning had frightened her with the notion that she should not be able to stir a finger without giving offence. It was very gratifying, then, to be told that she had done well. Few elderly women could look more pleased, when she *was* pleased, than Mrs. Lovel. It was a pleasure to watch her face when her mind was at rest, when there was nothing to make her nervous. As Jessie looked at her she almost fancied that it was her own mother's

eyes which gazed with so much placid satisfaction upon her.

"I do think we shall get on very well together, after all," said the old lady, with great candour, and passed her arm through Jessie's; and so they walked home.

CHAPTER VII.

A NEW ACQUAINTANCE.

JESSIE wasn't very sorry that night when she went to bed to think that Sunday was over, and that there were six days before her, during which she would be allowed to take what pleasures she could find. Don't think her wicked. Mrs. Lovel was more to blame. Not that I wish to find fault with the old lady; her prejudices were on the right side. But Jessie had never been used to the moral straight-jacketing Mrs. Lovel had subjected her to during the day.

At La Force, she had been allowed to do as she liked; but this had been her privilege, because her father knew that she was not in the least likely to do anything she oughtn't to do. She tried to think what reason Mrs. Lovel could have for keeping the curtains drawn on Sundays, so as to exclude the sunshine, and reading from a book of which she could not really have relished the contents, as she never seemed to turn the pages, and putting on a stiff dress and an atrabilious face.

However, as she failed to discover any reasons for such proceedings, she had the good sense to go to sleep, and when she awoke it was Monday morning.

"Aunt," said she, when she met Mrs. Lovel at breakfast, "there will be no harm in my amusing myself in the garden to-day?"

"None whatever; but," looking through the window, "I don't quite see what you

can find to do in the garden. Can you sew ?"

"Oh yes. But I don't much care about sewing."

"How used you to pass the time at La Force ?"

"I can't tell. I did so many things. Gardening was my favourite amusement. Oh, auntie, would you mind my keeping animals ?"

"What do you call animals, my dear ?" inquired auntie, nervously.

"Why, rabbits; and I had a kid, and some white mice, and two doves, and several canaries."

"I have no objection to birds," said Mrs. Lovel, "but I don't think I could sleep in a house where there were mice."

"But white mice are the dearest little things. Mine used to run up my arm and eat off my shoulder."

Mrs. Lovel shuddered. "My objection to mice is, they smell so."

"Not white mice."

"Well, my dear, if I come across a canary I'll buy it for you. But I would rather not have any mice in my house. Surely you must have had other occupations besides doing garden-work and feeding animals?"

"I don't know what I did. The time went very quickly," said Jessie, with a sigh.

"I think you ought to do a little needle-work. It is a very becoming employment for women. Can you tat?"

"No."

"Crochet?"

"Yes."

"I'll teach you how to tat."

"I'll tell you what I *should* like—I wish you would let me look after your house."

"So you may if you like."

"May I do your shopping? I love spend-

ing money—it is such fun: and I can bargain splendidly."

"When you have got used to the town, and the ways of the people, you may do the shopping and welcome. But you are certain to be cheated if you are not accustomed to deal with English tradespeople. It is not bargaining that is wanted with them, but watching. You must use your eyes to see that they don't give you light weight. And then, you don't know our prices. What is fresh butter a pound, my child?"

"I don't know, but I would soon find out."

"And meat—are you a judge of meat?"

"Pretty good," said Jessie, with charming gravity. "I know the names of the different joints."

"Yes, yes; but could you tell Southdown from sheep fed in this county?"

"I'd ask the butchers."

"*They'll* tell you nothing," cried the old

lady, with great asperity. "If they see you are ignorant they'll send you home a leg of ewe-mutton, and stand you out that it was the primest joint in their shop in defiance of their noses. That happened to me only a fortnight ago; and whilst I live I shall never lose the memory of the smell that filled the house while the thing was cooking. It drove Jane out of the kitchen and made this parlour and even my bedroom unfit to enter the whole day. Such dishonesty as there is among the tradespeople of this town is shocking to think of. If they'll send bad butter home to *me*—to me who am a Suffolk-bred woman and can tell good butter, I was going to say, by putting my ear to it—how would they serve you? We should all be poisoned!"

"At all events, I could pay the bills."

"Yes, you could do that. But it is not very amusing. I'll ask Mr. Lockfield if he can't find some parish work for you.

How would you like to hear some charity-children their school-lessons, twice a week ?"

"I should be frightened."

"Well, there are Bible-classes held three times a week at the Free Schools. Would you like to assist ?"

"I think I should prefer to keep animals as I did at La Force," said Jessie, with some hesitation, after thinking.

"After all, we needn't be in a hurry to do anything," exclaimed Mrs. Lovel, who secretly sympathized with Jessie's reluctance to have dealings with charity-children, having herself undergone a long experience in that direction, and remembering it without the pure and unalloyed satisfaction all excellent actions should inspire. "Would you like a walk ? I am quite at your service. The morning is fine, and you can see what there is to be seen ; though I am afraid there is not much."

Jessie, who would have lived out of doors

if she could, gladly accepted her aunt's proposal, ran for her hat and cloak, and was ready twenty minutes before the old lady's stair-shaking steps were heard descending. Jessie in a hat looked sweeter, if possible, than Jessie in a bonnet; more piquant, less demure. Her hat, be it understood, is of the soberest kind, such as would properly suit her sables. And yet it is a hat the like of which shall not be found in Sandhaven: completely French, completely graceful, and exhibiting as much of the gold-coloured hair as was necessary to illustrate her wealth in that respect. She looked healthier and more cheerful than when we first met her. Her father's death was too recent to suffer her to be happy; that is to say no greatly joyous impulse could possess her with that great grief lying like a cloud over her heart. But she was too young for melancholy to take a permanent hold on her spirits. Her nature, more-

over, was too gladsome and breezy to be unduly depressed even by so heavy an affliction as the death of a dearly-beloved parent. And then, again, she was perfectly at home with Mrs. Lovel. It is true that she had been several times chided during the two days she had passed at her aunt's house; but the old lady's rebukes had rather improved than diminished the tender confidence the young girl felt in her relative, and gave force to the instinctive assurance of her heart that, underlying all Mrs. Lovel's queer prejudices and proneness to rebuke very little mistakes, were a hundred rare and solid virtues, a most honourable nature, the kindest, the most Christian feelings.

"When I come back, aunt," said Jessie, as they left the house, "I must write to Mrs. Malcolmson. I should have written last night but thought you wouldn't like it."

"It is as well that you deferred your letter."

"I gave away all my animals to her children before I left La Force, excepting my goat. Oh, aunt, it is the dearest little kid. Mrs. Malcolmson promised to keep it for me. May I ask her to send it?"

"But how could she send it?" demanded Mrs. Lovel, her nerves instantly giving way and driving her mind into ugly speculations as to the delivery, one morning, of a dead goat at her house.

"Why, just as they send cattle across to England."

"Ay, but see what a way it has to come. The thing would perish of hunger."

"Mrs. Malcolmson will see that it has plenty of food. She will pay the people to take care of it."

"But doesn't it cry? doesn't it make a noise?"

"Yes—the dearest noise."

"Well, but, my child, I don't like noises. We have no stable. Where could it lodge?"

"I could easily get a man to build a little house for it, up in the corner of the garden, quite out of sight."

"It would eat all the flowers."

"No, it would be tied by a string. In the day time it could browse in the field opposite. Say I may write for it, auntie?"

"But suppose anything should happen to it on the road? Suppose it died, or broke its leg or something? I do think it would be cruel to bring a dumb creature all that distance."

La Force to Mrs. Lovel appeared in a general way about a thousand leagues farther off than Botany Bay.

However, Jessie persisted, and Mrs. Lovel at last gave way, told her she might have the goat, and made up her mind, on the spot, henceforth while her life lasted, to be

awakened every morning at four o'clock by the goat's cries.

"Where shall we go?" she asked, coming to a pause in the High Street. "This town is very small and I hardly know anything worth showing you in it."

"Is there any country at the back, aunt?"

"Why, yes, but it's rather flat. We'll walk in that direction, if you like."

And so they went up the High Street. Jessie looked into the shop windows as she passed them, but saw little to detain her. She thought the town had a very dull appearance, and wondered where all the people had hidden themselves.

"At this hour of the morning at La Force," said she, "the streets are full of people. You can't guess what a pretty sight they make—the soldiers in their blue coats and red trousers, the women in tall, fan-shaped caps, the little gamins racing

upon the pavements, the priests in their shovel-hats, gliding solemnly among the people reading books; and there always appeared to me to be sunshine in the air; the vane on the steeple of the church would flash and quiver as if it were a beam of light in the sky, and the trees looked green all the year round. I am sure you would prefer La Force to Sandhaven, aunt."

"I think not, child. I am very well content to be where I am. See that church," pointing to St. Michael's: "what have you abroad to approach it in beauty? No—I won't say beauty: you have grand cathedrals, I know, and splendid places of worship in which I, for one, never could say my prayers. But look at the sunshine there upon the ivy and the old walls, of as rich a colour as mortal eyes could wish to see, and the weeping willows in the churchyard, and the white stones shining through

the railings. There is a peace and loveliness in that scene," said the old lady gently, "which you'll find nowhere out of England. You can feel that you are at home when you have such a church as that near you. A church like that tells you more about the Protestant religion than all the books that ever were written."

"It is very pretty," said Jessie, looking with sorrowful eyes upon the gravestones, and thinking of the little cemetery at La Force, where her father and mother were sleeping side by side. "Why do you attend the other church?"

"Mr. Lockfield is a friend of mine," answered Mrs. Lovel, "and to tell you the truth I am not a Puseyite. The rector of St. Michael's and his curates are carrying things a great deal too far to my mind. They have choristers who come into church singing, the rector and his curates walking among them!"

"I should like to see that; it must be very pretty."

"Pretty!" cried the old lady. "Who goes to church to see pretty things? People go to pray, I hope."

"But couldn't people pray among pretty sights better than among ugly ones?"

"I don't see what religion's got to do either with pretty or ugly sights," said Aunt Lovel, impatiently. "I hope, when you pray, that your mind is dead to all external things, and only thinks of the words it says."

And she turned away from the railings near which they had paused.

"Here is Mr. Lockfield," exclaimed Jessie, following her aunt, "and the man who stared at me yesterday in church."

Mrs. Lovel turned her head, and perceived Mr. Lockfield coming towards them from the High Street, in company with the

Turkish-tobacco coloured gentleman, whom she had styled Mr. Andrews.

"Ah, Mrs. Lovel! how are you?" cried the little man, running forward with outstretched hand. He took off his hat very politely to Miss Marchmont, who made him a bow entirely graceful and completely French.

"Mr. Andrews," he said, turning to his companion, who couldn't remove his eyes from Jessie, "come, and let me introduce you to Mrs. Lovel—my valued, my most valued friend, Mrs. Lovel, and her niece, Miss Marchmont."

Up stepped the young fellow, without the least diffidence, and saluted the ladies in a very superior manner. Mrs. Lovel looked at him hard, and said:

"I once had the pleasure of meeting your lamented papa, sir, at Major Johnstone's, when that gentleman lived in Sea View Place. But you spend the greater

part of your time away from Sandhaven, I believe ?"

"Yes, I find it rather too dull for me, Mrs. Lovel," said Mr. Andrews, with a smile. "Why even Lockfield complains of it sometimes."

"It certainly isn't as gay as London: but then we have got here what you Londoners would spend millions to introduce into the metropolis—I mean fresh air and the sea," answered Mr. Lockfield.

"Don't call me a Londoner," cried Mr. Andrews, laughing; "I am a real Sandhavenite."

"I don't know much about London," remarked Mrs. Lovel, taking Jessie's hand and tucking it under her arm; "but I feel it very chilly standing here."

"Which way were you going?" asked Mr. Lockfield.

"We were going for a walk."

"Mr. Andrews and I will bear you com-

pany, if you will let us," said Mr. Lockfield, and he gave the old lady, as he spoke, a peculiar look, which, however, was utterly lost upon her.

"Pray don't let us take you out of your road," said Mrs. Lovel, nervously, watching Mr. Andrews, and wondering which side of the road he meant to walk on, that she might keep Jessie on the other side.

"I, for one, shan't be going out of my road by keeping straight on," said Mr. Andrews, "for this is the way to my house. Can I prevail upon you and Miss Marchmont to walk as far as there and take lunch? My sister will be very glad to see you."

"You are very kind, sir," answered Mrs. Lovel, who was an old-fashioned lady, and always said "sir" to a stranger; "you are very kind, sir," said she, with much dignity of politeness, "but we dine at two, and I

left word with Jane that we should be home punctually by that time."

"It is very strange," observed Mr. Andrews, posting himself beside the old lady and pretending to stoop and look into her face, though, in reality, he was staring at Jessie whom Mr. Lockfield was chatting with jocularly; "it is very strange, Mrs. Lovel, that you and I should have lived so long in Sandhaven, and never been introduced to each other before to-day. Not that I can consider you a stranger. Your name and face have been familiar to me for a long time, whilst your kindness to the poor——"

"Say nothing of that, sir," said Mrs. Lovel, quickly. "Tell me of other people being kind to the poor; that always pleases me."

Here a hearty laugh from Mr. Lockfield caused Mrs. Lovel to look around: and

Mr. Andrews said, "What is amusing you?" enviously.

"Miss Marchmont was telling me that she is going to have her goat sent across from France; and the mention of the word goat brought a story into my head that has always delighted me. When I was a little boy, my mother had a goat-chaise made for me, and bought a goat to draw it. One goat was found unequal to the work, so she got the gardener to procure another. Well, Mrs. Lovel, another goat was bought and put into the stable with goat number one. But no sooner did they see each other, than they fell to butting and fighting like mad things. My mother being afraid that they would kill each other, sent for the man who had sold the goat, and asked him what he meant by selling her such a quarrelsome animal? 'The other that I bought from you,' says she, 'is docile enough.' 'And so is this one,' answered

the man; 'only I quite forgot to mention that them goats is related. The fact is, mum, the goat I last sold you was t'other one's aunt.' And this was positively the case, Mrs. Lovel: and what is truly surprising is, that neither of those goats ever offered to fight with other goats, but could not meet each other without lowering their heads and bouncing their horns into each other's bosoms."

"What dreadful animals!" exclaimed Mrs. Lovel, who accepted the story as a mere contribution to the science of zoology. "I hope your goat isn't quarrelsome, Jessie?"

"It is very loving," answered Jessie.

"Are you fond of animals, Miss Marchmont?" asked Mr. Andrews.

"Very."

"Mrs. Lovel," said Mr. Lockfield, "I suppose you have heard what the latest novelty is at St. Michael's—perpetrated yesterday?"

She inquired what? for all church news interested her. Mr. Lockfield crossed to tell her; Mr. Andrews made way for him, and so the gentlemen changed sides.

"I could get you some very pretty specimens of goats, if you like them," said Mr. Andrews, looking into Jessie's face and thinking that he had never met a prettier girl.

"I only care for my own goat, thank you. It is a great pet of mine, and knows me."

"I have plenty of meadow-land entirely at your service, if ever you should be at a loss to know where to put it to browse."

She thanked him again, and answered that there was a field opposite her aunt's house, which she thought would yield her goat grass enough to last it for ever.

"You haven't been in Sandhaven very long, have you? I think Mr. Lockfield told me you arrived last Saturday."

"On Saturday afternoon."

"After living abroad this town must appear a dreary hole to you."

"Were you ever in France?" she asked, looking up at him.

"Only in Paris, I am ashamed to say. I was there last year."

"Do you like the French?"

He fancied, by the way she asked the question, that if he answered "No" she would be pleased. So he answered "No." "No true Englishman does," he said.

"My father did, and he was an Englishman," answered Jessie, quickly.

Mr. Andrews saw he had made a mistake.

"I ought to explain. An Englishman may like a Frenchman as a man, but he never can greatly care about the French as a nation. They have been our enemies too long. We are fighting them all through our history."

"I don't know anything about that,

but I never like people who don't like the French."

"What's that about the French?" asked Mrs. Lovel, interrupting Mr. Lockfield.

"There's my house!" cried Mr. Andrews, anxious to change the subject. They had come to the top of the hill, and before them was a wide expanse of country, flat as a map. Down there on the right was a long white house, seen but imperfectly through the leafless trees that hedged it about. Near it ran a ribbon-shaped river, which shone like steel under the wintry sky, and twisted and turned about in its passage through the country, until it vanished out of reach of human sight. In the centre of a broad, brown-coloured plain, was a little village, looking very naked and cold for want of wood. "There's my house," said Mr. Andrews, pointing to the white building among the trees.

"You are very lucky to possess such an estate, sir," said Mrs. Lovel, halting.

"It stretches from the banks of that river, to that bit of a hill you see with the bunch of trees on top," observed Mr. Andrews, pointing.

"Niece," exclaimed Mrs. Lovel, "we will now turn back."

"Pray come as far as my house and rest yourselves. See, it isn't more than a quarter of a mile off," said Mr. Andrews.

"Many thanks, but we dine at two," answered Mrs. Lovel.

Mr. Andrews mentally wished the old lady at Jericho, and thought her offensively obstinate. But his sensations were not so acute as to prevent him from being polite. He pulled off his hat and made the ladies as fine a bow as Jessie ever remembered seeing executed in France, and walked off with Mr. Lockfield, who went to lunch with him.

"He is not wanting in manners," said Mrs. Lovel, as they turned their faces toward the town. "But I doubt his morals. I am told he got terribly into debt when at Oxford, and, do you know, I am suspicious of a youth who, with so fine a house to call his own as that behind us," tossing her head backwards, "prefers hanging about London."

"He finds Sandhaven dull, he said. He asked me if I didn't think it a dreary hole."

"He can have no mind—no resources," exclaimed Mrs. Lovel, chafing under the charge brought against her dearly-beloved Sandhaven. "He cannot have intellect enough to amuse himself. Why doesn't he marry, and subside into a country gentleman? His family is good. His grandfather I remember having married a daughter of the Earl of Cornpool, though the Andrewses thought that no honour, as they profess to have flourished in Scotland be-

fore that country was discovered by the Ancient Britons."

"Does he live by himself in that big house?"

"No—didn't you hear him speak of his sister? She is an invalid, I believe, who is deformed and very sickly. Mr. Lockfield talks of her with concern and affection—but I have never seen her."

"I don't think him nice looking."

"My dear, faces are nothing."

"I don't know, aunt. I like nice-looking people. A pleasant face is always agreeable."

"And so is a picture. But it contributes nothing to human happiness. In fact, my experience of life is that plain people live more comfortably together as husbands and wives than handsome persons. Honest ugliness always has a contented mind. A little beauty—as to *great* beauty, you never see it nowadays—a little beauty, I say, de-

stroys the flavour of life for its possessor as a spoonful of wine in a tumbler of water, takes the virtue out of the water as a good, wholesome, refreshing draught."

Jessie asked a few more questions about Mr. Andrews, not because she was in the slightest degree interested in him, but because she could find nothing else to talk about. Mrs. Lovel did not appear very greatly prejudiced in his favour, but admitted that the only reasons she had for not liking him were that he had got into debt at Oxford, and preferred London to Sandhaven.

There was another reason, however, why Mrs. Lovel didn't like Mr. Andrews, and that was—because Jessie was with her. Comprenez-vous? Mr. Andrews was a young man, and Mrs. Lovel was an old woman, and Miss Marchmont was a pretty, innocent little girl, who had no friend in the wide world but her auntie. Now when

a young man stares very hard at a pretty girl who is praying with an old lady in church, or walking with her in the highway, what are you to expect? The old lady will be afflicted with nervous misgivings. At twenty love is a sentiment paradisiacal; at sixty it is a spring-gun, a man-trap, a pit, a fly in the ointment, a skeleton at the feast of humanity, a mote in the eye of being. Mrs. Lovel could not have her niece walking on one side of her, and a young man walking on the other side of her, without suffering from mingled emotions of bewilderment and fear. It mattered nothing whether the young man's name happened to be Andrews or Tomkins. Had Mr. Andrews been Mr. Tomkins, and always supposing Mr. Tomkins not to be in holy orders—a white necktie, in Mrs. Lovel's opinion exercising the same sort of restraint on a man's moral nature that a strait waistcoat exercises on a man's physical nature—

her prejudices would have risen to meet and keep him off as readily as they now rose against Mr. Lockfield's young patron. And isn't this kind of fear respectable? Isn't it proper, and becoming, and what you look for? Think what a world this would be if all the old ladies threw their doors open to Cupid, and made room for the youngster at their tables and hearths! What marriages would take place! Amelia, the hope of a father, a mother, four unplaced sons, several aunts and uncles, the parson of the parish and three churchwardens, simpering in the larder with—hush! Julia, fit to mate with an earl's son, giving away her jewels to—ah! Sophia who refused a baronet (because the title isn't high enough, thinks her fond mamma) exchanging ringlets with her—pshaw! I say, old ladies of the Mrs. Lovel kind are the real safeguards of society, and do a thousandfold more things than blood, and breeding, and education, to keep girls

in the places that belong to them. Depend upon it, Maria, thou best of mothers-in-law, that old ladies of the kind I am talking about keep an infinite and wonderful variety of clerks, curates, lieutenants, authors, painters, and Irishmen possessed of immense estates in the county Galway, disconsolate, and save families of the greatest distinction the unspeakable mortification of having a sister they can't acknowledge, or a daughter that lets her second floor.

CHAPTER VIII.

MR. LOCKFIELD'S IDEA.

JESSIE wrote to Mrs. Malcolmson, and asked her to send Bijou to Sandhaven, Kent, Angleterre.

"I am very happy: my aunt is a very, very nice old lady, particularly religious, and unlike anybody I ever could have fancied in her ways. We live in a pretty house, which has no drawing-room, but a salle-à-manger just like that picture in the old book you once lent me, where three ladies with immense head-dresses are playing at cards, and one has snatched up the candlestick to throw it at her partner. I

miss my animals very, very much, but shall be happier when Bijou comes—and often think of dear La Force, and would give I can't tell what if I could only get my aunt to go and live there. But she is prejudiced against the French, and thinks the English perfect, which I can't understand, for the people here are anything but that: they wear very ill-fitting clothes, and have square faces and immense feet, and you should see the women's bonnets! As yet I have only met *one* gentleman, and he has fluffy whiskers and such an indistinct sort of face, that I declare it is like looking at a person through a glass of water. I could see he wanted to be *very* polite to me, but my aunt wouldn't let him. His name is Andrews, and he is an Oxford man, and has a great fortune, they say, and a big white house about a mile from where we live, which he was *most* anxious to show us. But we declined. His grandfather mar-

ried an earl's daughter. Perhaps you know the name in Scotland?

"I am looking very much better, but at times am dreadfully depressed when I think of poor papa and my dear friends at La Force, and the darling old town which it seems an age since I left. But I am truly grateful for having so kind a friend as my aunt given me, whom I love more and more, because I can *feel* how good her heart is, though she says such things, and is so fond of arguing, that a stranger would think her anything but amiable. Dearest Mrs. Malcolmson, as soon as ever the flowers come, will you buy the very prettiest, and lay them upon papa's and mamma's graves for *me?* There is a sweet little church here, called St. Michael's, with a calm and shady graveyard around it. I wish my loved ones were buried there. Sandhaven would be more homelike if *they* were not so far away."

She ended this letter with a long postscript, in which she begged Mrs. Malcolmson to see that her Bijou had a nice box and plenty of food, and to be sure to put a large label upon it (the box), that it might reach her safely, and not be carried off into Wales or America.

Two days after this letter had been despatched, the esteemed rector of St. Mary's dropped in and found the ladies at tea. Mrs. Lovel welcomed him very kindly, and pulled the bell for another cup. The toast was cold, but there was a pretty little silver toasting-fork in the fender, and, actuated by the most amiable feelings, Jessie cut a slice of bread, fell on her knees, and made some fresh toast for the little gentleman.

"Really, Miss Marchmont," said he, "you are most obliging."

His little eyes sparkled as he looked at her, for in all his experience he had never met a prettier creature. How graceful

was her figure kneeling! how white the hand holding the silver toasting-fork! how radiant her hair in the glowing fire-light! how sweetly her pearly teeth shone through her rosy lips when she turned, with a smile, and handed him another piece of toast!

"Pray take care!" cried Mrs. Lovel, anxiously leaning forward with outstretched hand: "the toast is very hot!"

Mr. Lockfield said he didn't mind; and some hours later thought of the diverting and witty compliment he could have paid Jessie; but good things generally come too late. Jessie went on making toast, somewhat surprised that Mr. Lockfield, in spite of his assurances that he needed no more, contrived to dispose of all that she gave him—but then she had not lived long enough in England to understand the ample and afflicting capacities of the clerical appetite—until Mr. Lockfield, in tones of mingled entreaty and pathos, begged her

to put away the toasting-fork. So she went back to her chair and nursed the kitten.

The conversation that ensued between the clergyman and Mrs. Lovel did not greatly interest her. It treated wholly of the scandalous proceedings of Mr. Minto, of St. Michael's, and his curates. Jessie thought at first that these gentlemen were Roman Catholics, for she heard a great deal about confession, and transubstantiation, and candles, and vestments, and genuflexions, and other treasonable and papistical proceedings. I say that this conversation did not greatly interest her, partly because she couldn't follow Mr. Lockfield's arguments, and partly because the clergymen of whom Mr. Lockfield spoke were strangers to her. But had she guessed what a profound and exciting source of interest this subject was to the people of Sandhaven, she would assuredly have bent a more attentive ear to Mr. Lockfield's re-

marks, and to Mrs. Lovel's ejaculations. It must be owned that into pretty nearly every Christian family in Sandhaven, Mr. Minto had succeeded in introducing a very unchristian spirit of wrangling. There were Mintoites and there were Lockfieldites. The latter ites were very angry, very scandalized, raised all sorts of cries. "The wisdom of ages!" "Venerable antiquity!" "No Popery!" "No innovation!" "Corruption!" "The Bishops!" "Disestablishment!" "The Throne!" "Atheism!" "Ancestors to the rescue!" "Ecclesiastical millinery!" "Luther for ever!" were some among the many texts upon which fireside theologians argued, proved, contradicted, perspired, grew puzzled, and lost their tempers.

There was a local paper, with a Scotch deist for an editor. He waited until the opposing forces had asserted themselves vehemently enough to enable him to see

where the majority lay, and then he went in for Lockfieldism. Yes! though Mr. Lockfield was not popular in the pulpit, his cause was the popular one, and the greater proportion of the people of Sandhaven rallied round the little bit of an ecclesiastical flag which the utmost strength of his intellectual powers had enabled him to hoist. You can conceive that he should have a great deal to talk about to so sympathetic a listener as Mrs. Lovel. On this night he had a particular grievance to relate. Some enemy to the truth had scattered broadcast a falsehood—an abominable falsehood. This wretched being, whom he could mention by name, but Heaven forbid that he should forget his dignity by condescending to appear to know the miscreant, had asserted with all the impudence of malignant dulness, that he, Mr. Lockfield, viewing with concern the gradual thinning of his congregation, and the consequent in-

crease of Mr. Minto's hearers, had determined to introduce into his services features in every respect similar to those that characterized the *performances* at St. Michael's, and had written up to London to a distinguished Bachelor of Music for his terms as a resident organist.

As he mentioned this atrocious piece of scandal, Mr. Lockfield worked himself into such a temper that Jessie had the utmost difficulty to preserve her gravity; but growing afraid at last that she must burst into a fit of laughter—the very necessity of seeming grave rendering the restraint of mirth the more difficult—she tumbled the kitten off her lap and hastily left the room.

And now I am to record a phenomenon.

Scarcely had Jessie closed the door when Mr. Lockfield's indignation fell from him; he turned in his chair to see if the young lady had really withdrawn; and then with

a sobriety of voice that utterly astonished Mrs. Lovel, in whose ears his vehement rhetoric was still ringing, said:

"I want to take the opportunity of your niece's absence, Mrs. Lovel, to say something to you about her that may produce a beneficial—a wonderful alteration in her prospects."

"What do you say?" cried Mrs. Lovel.

Mr. Lockfield, with another glance at the door, repeated his remark.

Now poor Mrs. Lovel was the very last person in the world to say anything in the least degree mysterious to; for such was the activity of her imagination, and such the morbid condition of her nervous system that it was a simple necessity she should immediately fasten an alarming and distressing construction on the first gravely-uttered sentence addressed to her, the full meaning of which she could not promptly and satisfactorily master.

"Mr. Lockfield," said she with extreme agitation, "I beg that anything you have to say against my niece you will let me hear at once!"

"God bless my heart, Mrs. Lovel!" cried the clergyman, almost as much agitated as his companion by her extraordinary remark, "I am not going to say anything against your niece. On the contrary, I am going to say something very much in favour of her."

"Your manner frightened me," said the old lady, pulling off her spectacles and beginning to polish them. "I fully understood that you were going to say something to prejudice me against Jessie."

"Indeed, then, what I am going to say ought to increase your affection for her."

He looked for the third time in the direction of the door, and dropping his head a little on one side, and gazing at the old lady with a queer mixture of gravity and

slyness in the expression of his face, he said:

"How would you like to see her well married?"

By the light that kindled in Mrs. Lovel's eyes, a bystander might have been disposed to think that her idea for the moment was —Mr. Lockfield was in love with her niece, and was about to ask her permission to make her his wife. She stared at him with a sense of pins and needles in her body.

"I ask you, Mrs. Lovel," he repeated, rubbing his hands, "how would you like to see her well married?"

"What do you call *well* married, Mr. Lockfield?"

"Two thousand pounds a year, ma'am, and a furnished house in London during the season."

"Who is he?" asked the old lady.

"Peter Andrews," answered the little

man with a smile so voluminous that it seemed to embrace the whole of his little person in its folds.

"Peter Andrews!" cried Mrs. Lovel amazed. "Why he and my niece have scarcely set eyes on each other yet."

"It is a case of love at first sight."

"Not on my niece's part," said Mrs. Lovel with a toss of her head, "for she has no opinion of the youth's face, and calls his whiskers fluff."

"Does she know his income?" inquired Mr. Lockfield, looking monstrously sly.

"And what if she did?—though she doesn't."

"The reflection of gold throws a very becoming light on the human face and figure."

"I'll venture to say Mr. Lockfield, that if Mr. Andrews slept in bank notes, and had his farm-yard stocked with geese that laid nothing but golden eggs, Jessie would

still call his whiskers fluff, and preserve her mean opinion of his face."

"Still it would be better for her to marry a man of family, and position, and fortune, even though his whiskers *are* very pale-coloured, and his face not oppressively handsome, than some poor creature with no better recommendation perhaps than a Roman nose and auburn curls, who should take her to live with him in a first-floor, and prove coarse and quarrelsome a month after marriage."

"God forbid!" said Mrs. Lovel earnestly. "But the child doesn't want to marry at all that I can see. Why, she's quite a baby. Mr. Andrews must have a very shallow understanding to be so easily charmed. I grant that Jessie is pretty; but he must have very little brains if he can fall in love with a face without having any knowledge of the mind that is behind it. He knows nothing of my niece; and I

really think he must be a very improper person to talk of marrying a young lady he has just been introduced to."

"You wrong him, Mrs. Lovel. He hasn't spoken of marrying her. I am persuaded that he is much too diffident to entertain any such notion even as a pleasing fancy. It is *my* idea."

"And what put it into your head?"

"Why, his extraordinary admiration. He declared to me the other day, after seeing her at church, that he had never beheld a lovelier girl. Now such a compliment from a man who is no provincial milksop, who has seen life, and in London mixes in first-rate society, struck me as highly gratifying and worth repeating."

"It is a young man's chatter," said Mrs. Lovel, half pleased and half jealous.

"No chatter at all. He is downright sincere. Countenance him, and you will

very soon see whether his admiration is artificial or not."

"Why should I countenance him? He hasn't fallen in love with *me*. Besides, it is really ridiculous to talk of my niece marrying. It was only the other day that she came to live with me."

"Pray understand me. I am not talking of your niece marrying. I am not talking of Mr. Andrews marrying. It is nothing to me who is in love and who isn't. All I wanted to say was this: Mr. Andrews professes an immense admiration for your niece. He has plenty of money, comes from an old stock, has a fine house, and no relations but a sister (who is a most excellent person) to create discord; and my opinion is this: that if you and Miss Marchmont think it worth while to give this young man encouragement, your niece may find herself sumptuously provided for for life."

"As Mrs. Andrews?" said the old lady looking at her little friend over her spectacles.

"As Mrs. Andrews."

"Well, Mr. Lockfield, I don't say that it wouldn't be a good thing for Jessie, who is an orphan, and has no one but me to look to. But aren't you trying to hatch egg shells? Admiration isn't marriage. Men may admire very fervently and still keep their distance."

"But Mr. Andrews's enthusiasm is of a very promising kind—very promising," said Mr. Lockfield, pressing the tips of his fingers together into a likeness of the ribs of a ship, and watching the fire through them. "And then again, you must remember he is his own master. He can marry whom he likes, and when he likes. He has no father to resent the introduction of an undowered bride: no mother to tease him with reproaches."

"I don't know what any father or mother could say against my niece. Her papa was a gentleman, and her mother was my sister. A lady is a fit mate for any man, be he duke or squire: and if men doubt this, let them go and seek for wives that *are* worthy of them in the forests of Africa."

"Nay, nay," responded Mr. Lockfield laughing, "the reverse is the case: it is the ladies who think our sex unworthy of them."

"Then I am happy to think that the world has grown wiser in some respects since I was a girl," said Mrs. Lovel, reflecting by a placid smile the amused expression on her friend's face.

"But seriously, Mrs. Lovel, I would not dismiss this subject too hastily if I were you. Indeed I rather hoped you would be pleased to be told how warmly Mr. Andrews admires your niece. Some of these

days it will be your duty to find her a husband——"

"Never!" interrupted the old lady emphatically. "Never! Rather tell me that it will be my duty to guard her from a husband. I am very well aware that marriage is a holy and sacred thing—after it has happened. But it isn't holy and sacred before, and so I see nothing to prevent me from protecting a girl against its temptations. What idea has a young creature like my niece of the troubles, worries, anxieties, obligations that follow her out of the church and never leave her till she leaves them? Girls think that marriage is all orange blossoms, and white satin, and cake, and bland and complimentary friends. Is it, Mr. Lockfield? You and I are no longer young. Is it all bridesmaids? Those bridesmaids, I say, are shams. They throw off their veils—their disguise—after leaving the church, and follow her and never leave

her! bridesmaids in straw bonnets and dirty aprons, called servants! bridesmaids with bare arms and impudent tongues, who give notice but come again, making the old impertinence, the old wastefulness, the old love of dirt with new faces! aren't I right?"

"Servants are certainly very great troubles. You will hardly credit that my cook gave me notice this morning simply because I politely, really politely, Mrs. Lovel, hinted that she was a little too fond of sending me up hard-boiled eggs. She is a woman of sixty, with an underlip that touches her nose when she talks, and muffles her voice, so I scarcely heard what she said. But I am certain she abused the clergy."

"I keep only one girl," said Mrs. Lovel, "and she was trouble enough at the beginning to make my life a burden. Thanks to me she has improved wonderfully during

the last year, but—but I am certain she has a lover. This I cannot submit to. I have endured a good deal from her—especially her fondness for raw onions, and her habit of breathing hard whilst waiting at table. But a lover! of late one of my grocer's—Sandman's—assistants has been calling for orders three or four times a morning. I have watched him. He slips in through the gate and goes to the kitchen door, and never rings or knocks, for I've listened. Now that persuades me that Jane watches for him. I'll charge her with it before long. What should she do with a sweetheart? she who has twelve pounds a year and does her own washing? But these girls, Mr. Lockfield, will, as you well know, quit a comfortable kitchen, and a warm bed, and plenty to eat and drink, for the first dirty-faced man that gives them a look, and go into a sty with him, and get beaten every night, and be fined or

imprisoned by the magistrates for preferring to sleep in the field to returning to the husband and his poker! That was the case with Martha Straddles, who lived with me eighteen months, and then married into a lodging, so shocking to see, and so close-smelling, that Mr. Mangles the relieving officer, as stout and healthy a man as ever I saw, fainted away on entering it, and never enjoyed his food after, as he himself told me three months before his death."

"And yet, do what you may, love will manage to creep into the scullery just as artfully as it enters the drawing-room," said Mr. Lockfield, who saw that while Mrs. Lovel remained so warm, no good could come from reverting to the topic he had before been discussing.

However, at this point Jessie entered the room, which was a signal for the old people to end their argument. There was still a tell-tale look in Jessie's eyes of the

uncontrollable fit of merriment that had seized her in her bedroom, where she had been loitering until she believed her gravity to be sufficiently established to enable her to look at Mr. Lockfield without laughing.

Though nothing more was said that night about Mr. Andrews, and no more arguments took place on the subject of love, Mrs. Lovel frequently found herself wondering what could have made Mr. Lockfield speak of the young man as a likely husband for Jessie. "They have scarcely set eyes on each other," thought she again and again. The fact was, Mrs. Lovel knew nothing at all about love at first sight. If in her younger days she had ever read of such a thing she had quite forgotten all about it. When she was a girl, love, courtship, and marriage were very frequently processes almost as long as a chancery suit. Those were the days of pantalettes and sausage curls, and dresses which

took eight yards of stuff: I think they called them gowns. Though long before then Love had pulled off his periwig and solitaire, and dropped his allusions to Venus's doves, and honey and lambs, for the less genuine language of the passions, he was still a very ceremonious young gentleman, calm and reflecting, with a weakness for names, dates, and certificates, who fell upon his knees with judgment, and got up again with deliberation, and who gave way to his feelings, and puffed and blubbered only on the rarest occasions. Of course in every age people *have* fallen in love with each other at first sight: but Mrs. Lovel's memory limited her to the discreeter features of the past. It seemed inconceivable to her that any man in his senses should like a woman well enough to marry her by merely looking at her face. Was her character nothing? her temper? her religious sentiments? her brains nothing? The

roses he admired might be rouge. The hair he thought beautiful might be false. The elegant figure might be wadding. It was the mind Mrs. Lovel thought of. That was the only part of the human animal that could be really beautiful or ugly. Yes, dear Mrs. Lovel, you are perfectly right. The mind is everything — at your age. Only please to remember that you wear spectacles, that your sight is not so good as it used to be, and that a handsome face cannot have the same attractions for you as it would have were your sight keen. One can't always preserve one's tastes. Little Julia likes tarts and pine-apple drops, and roars when her nurse scrubs her face, and forces her into a clean pinafore. But by-and-by Julia will neglect those tarts and drops, and find the utmost pleasure in submitting to the operation of being dressed by another species of nurse called a lady's-maid. Life, Mrs. Lovel, is but the see-saw

your friend Mr. Lockfield, with that happy audacity and originality of metaphor that distinguishes his sermons, once compared it to. "Beloved," he said, "the young go up and the old go down; and those who are down have to get off with rueful faces, and walk away that others may take their place."

And talking of Mr. Lockfield, what, we want to know, had he to do with Mr. Andrews's admiration of Jessie? I think the reason is given somewhere near the beginning of this story, where you may read that the living of St. Mary's was in Peter's gift. Let us speak the truth: there is no need to look mysterious.

Mr. Andrews, after seeing Jessie at church, had told his friend the rector, for whom he had waited in the porch, what he thought of her beauty. "You know Mrs. Lovel," said he, "and you must introduce me." Next day, you remember, Mr. Lockfield did

introduce him. Andrews was enchanted with Jessie. He amused and diverted his little friend with his laudations of the girl as he sat over his lunch; and ended his unprecedented rhetoric by declaring that he was head over ears in love.

Now wasn't it perfectly reasonable, wasn't it perfectly consistent with human nature, was it—any bishop you choose shall decide—was it anywise opposed to the traditions of the Church of England, that Mr. Lockfield should have been animated with an amiable and permanent solicitude to stand well with his young patron? With the father he had always stood well; there was no reason why he shouldn't be loved by the son. If Mr. Andrews were really sincere in his admiration of Jessie Marchmont, Mr. Lockfield might do him a service. The young fellow's success with the niece would depend a good deal upon the aunt. The aunt was full of prejudices—strong, old-

fashioned prejudices. But then Mr. Lockfield had a good deal of influence with her. *He* knew, if Mr. Andrews didn't, that money and position would have little weight with her if they were not supported by virtues she could admire, a character she could respect. Among her prejudices, he was very well aware, was a true-Briton-like fear of and aversion to the Pope, and an objection to matrimony. His holiness might defend himself: but Mr. Lockfield thought a good deal could be said in favour of marriage. What, then, should he do, but lose no time to hint to Mrs. Lovel that Mr. Andrews admired her niece? If this should prejudice her against the young gentleman so much the better; it would only increase the obligation he would put Mr. Andrews under by paving his way into the old lady's esteem by all the arguments he could bring to bear, and all the influence he knew how to exert.

There was really quite as much good nature in Mr. Lockfield's resolution as self-interest. He admired and immensely liked Jessie, and had a great fondness for her aunt. How, reasoned he, should he better serve them both than by contriving a match between Jessie and rich Mr. Andrews? She would be the first lady in the district as the squire's wife. She was sweet, and gentle, and affectionate, and would always be his friend should Mr. Andrews take it into his head to fall out with his rector. He knew what a friend of that sort was worth. When he had first gone into the church he had a curacy worth thirty pounds a year, in a barren county, where bread was always a penny a loaf dearer than elsewhere, and where the congregation came to church with bull-dogs at their heels. He started a Bible Society in the place, and the bishop told him to put it down or he would put him down. He didn't put it

down, and the bishop refused to let him officiate. His brother-curate swelled with anger at this treatment, and wrote to his mother, who wrote to a friend, who knew a lady who was very intimate with the archbishop's wife. That unknown kind lady saved Mr. Lockfield from a rather grim future: for his capital at that time scarcely exceeded ten pounds, and the bishop's fat person — until the archbishop humanely bundled the prelate out of the poor curate's light—obstructed the faintest glimpse of any other diocese. I don't suppose such a thing could—would, I mean—happen in these times. A curate so treated would probably become a dissenter; or a subscription would be raised to help him to bring the bishop and his chaplain before the lawyers; and the air would be clouded with octavo pamphlets, and the diocese distressed with meetings, while the "Church Gazette" fought with the "Episcopal News,"

and the "Sacred Trowel" blubbered in the arms of the "Protestant Review." Still, it is certain that Mr. Lockfield might have had to keep an academy, or become a tutor, but for the swollen, genial, sympathetic curate whose mother knew, &c.; and that experience lying like a slug on the flower of John Lockfield's early manhood, you can understand how it was that he should have a fancy for seeing his great friend's niece mistress at Springfield Hall.

CHAPTER IX.

BIJOU ARRIVES.

AMONG the many fears with which Mrs. Lovel had been afflicted before the arrival of Jessie, was a dread that the young lady would find Sandhaven intolerably dull, and that she would get into all sorts of mischief in a wild and hopeless quest of amusement.

Now what mischief there was to be got into at Sandhaven Mrs. Lovel might have been defied to find out.

1. There were no young men to flirt with; to be met on the sands with; to be

seen hand in hand with; to be set down as going to be married to.

2. What parties were given the most jealous young dog in the world might have let his fiancée attend alone without an emotion of distrust; for at these parties there was no dancing, there were no men whom the hostess could not guarantee as over thirty-five; in fact they were Tea Parties.

It is perfectly true that when St. Michael's Church had fallen into the hands of the Puseyites, two curates had burst upon the astonished gaze of Sandhaven—two curates where, in ancient days, there had been but one. But whether it was that these two gentlemen were already engaged, or that they did their work without any ambition of female applause, or that the young ladies of the place had become, through the force of habit, tradition, and despair, absolutely indifferent to the neglectful sex; our friends

the curates were, after a surprisingly short space of time, surveyed without emotion, and their movements watched without hope or dread. If I don't mention Mr. Lockfield's curate it is because he was an Irish gentleman aged forty-eight, with strong anti-socialistic prejudices and a red beard, who preferred his first floor over the bootmaker's, and his pipe and books to all the tea-parties in the world, and even to Mrs. Lovel's society.

So what mischief could Jessie have got into in such a place, even if her character had been as awful as Mrs. Lovel's nightmare apprehensions, before she saw her niece, had represented it—had she been a student of Voltaire, had she thought hairdressers nice men to dance with, had she had a fancy for young frogs, had she preferred Paul de Kock to Letitia Barbauld, in fine, had she been saturated with every species of Gallic naughtiness and was entirely cre-

dulous in the matter of Popish indulgences?

But, happily for Mrs. Lovel's peace of mind, Jessie had no character. This sounds an ugly charge to prefer against the heroine of a novel in an age when every heroine of a novel who has not a mission to keep her strong-minded is snubbed by the critics as a worthless nonentity and the author referred to some other author whom he or she doesn't admire in the least. And yet a poet, an author, a philosopher, the greatest man this century has produced after Wordsworth, a man that understood Shakespeare better than all his commentators and interpreters put together—Coleridge has declared that it is the highest perfection of a woman to be characterless, and speaks of Desdemona and Ophelia as women whom every man would like to marry. Jessie was pliable; Jessie was amiable; Jessie was charmingly childlike in her impulses and moods; Jessie was

imitative, fell easily into other people's ways, and did the thing she thought would please you. A "character" would have stood in the way of this pretty adaptability. A "character" is productive of theories; theories among the ladies beget resolutions; and resolutions lead to wrangles, quarrels, and tears. Jessie's theories were her aunt's. She had no other wish than to please her. The old lady's prejudices were, for the most part, too advanced for her; and so, even had her temper been disputatious, she couldn't have argued. Don't, pray don't suppose that she acquiesced in everything her aunt said. When Mrs. Lovel ridiculed the French, Jessie spoke up for them. When she abused the Catholics, Jessie got between the Pope and her kinswoman to save his holiness from the old lady's nails. But in the distinctive features of the every-day life she had entered upon, Jessie's charming availabilty showed her to be

characterless: naturally disposed to play the real woman's part, to follow instead of leading, to conform instead of moulding, to oblige instead of arguing. Your nestling natures are the dear ones, are the womanly ones. Jessie's was that in perfection. I would far rather that my wife forgot how to spell, than that she should forget how to be amiable.

She didn't find Sandhaven dull. To be sure the days I am writing about were early times. You might think she hadn't lived long enough at Sandhaven to find out how dull it was. And yet don't you know a good many young ladies who would have been bored to death by that dull town a week after their arrival in it?

The prospect from Mrs. Lovel's parlour consisted of a bit of a garden, a lane, and a meadow, crowned with a rim of chimney-pots. The diversions the town had to offer were: deserted pavements and a few shops,

whereof the articles exhibited for sale, particularly in the dress and millinery line, would have made welcome gifts to the trustees of the British Museum.

And yet Jessie didn't find Sandhaven dull. She made work for herself in the garden; she sat over the cosy fire, hemming, embroidering, knitting, netting, crocheting (she plied a learned needle); she took Jane into her confidence and instructed her in the knowledge of certain spicy French dishes, which Mrs. Lovel ate with applause, and wondered that such poor creatures as the French should have such neat hands at cooking; she ferreted about the house and shocked Mrs. Lovel's memories by the relics she disinterred. There was a tender gaiety in her manner that was irresistibly charming and winning. Her youth, her extreme innocence, her candour, her pretty childish ways, her melodious laugh, filled the house with a

spring-tide light and freshness. She could, indeed, be very sad in short intervals when she thought of the dead and her old French home, but always her baby-like nature would peep with its smiling face over the shoulder of weeping memory, and her eyes grow bright again and her melancholy hide itself away out of her own sight in her heart.

For the first week or two after she arrived Mrs. Lovel always made a point of accompanying her in her walks. The kind old creature had a prejudice against girls walking alone.

"Young ladies were always chaperoned in my days," said she; "and though I am not one of those who cling to old habits simply because they are old, and abuse new customs simply because they are new, yet I do think there are some old-fashioned views which the present generation would do no harm by preserving. Do young

ladies walk alone in the streets in France?"

Jessie hardly knew. Sometimes, she thought.

"Not," continued the old lady, "that there is anything to be feared in this town. I never met a beggar of any kind; there is little drunkenness, and we have some very strong constables."

It was partly the knowledge of the great security of Sandhaven streets, coupled with the strong indisposition to encounter the east wind, that made Mrs. Lovel, after a little, come to the conclusion that no very great harm would be done if Jessie now and then took a walk by herself. So one bright morning Jessie left the house for the first time since she had been at Sandhaven alone. She was never so happy as when she was in the open air at La Force, she had been indulged in most unbounded liberty of action, though she did not tell her

aunt so for fear of causing the old lady to conceive an ill opinion of her dead father. The old sense of freedom possessed her now as she walked. It was a fine thing to be able to go where she liked and stop when she liked, and to linger before the shop windows as long as it pleased her. Such had not been her privilege heretofore. Her aunt was always for going on. The old lady suffered from cold feet and hated to stand. Moreover she always chose one walk, a sheltered road near St. Michael's church, and Jessie was getting rather sick of that ever-recurring bit of scenery.

It was a February morning and the wind was in the east. Mrs. Lovel had seen that by watching the direction of the smoke from the chimney-pots that peeped over the meadow. But that same east wind, though very nipping and eager, had purified the sky and painted it a most heavenly azure. The sunshine sparkled in the hardened

wreaths of frost that lay curled on the house-tops and in the roadways. Jessie meant to go to Mr. Sampson's library to buy some note-paper and look over his books in the hope of finding a volume that should possess the two-fold merit of being interesting to her and unobjectionable to her aunt; but she could call at the library on her way home, and meanwhile she would enjoy the sparkling morning on the cliffs.

A little way past the row of houses which have been described as standing so near the edge of the cliff as to overlook the sands, was a species of parade—call it parade, for the local guide-book names it so—whereon were planted three iron seats. There was nobody visible but an old woman being dragged to and fro in a bath-chair. But what a sight was the sea! There it lay, stretching, eighty feet below, right into the blue sky, looking as smooth and unbroken as a steel mirror. In its deep heart the

sun had buried a glittering cone of silver, through which, as Jessie gazed, a vessel slowly passed, with all her sails set, scintillating like a vision that must vanish when it emerged into the blue water. Objects the most remote, surveyed through the purity of the keen air, were acutely defined. Yonder was the light-ship making the phantom line of the horizon picturesque with its spot of red. Far, far away—how far from Jessie! how close to France!—was a steamer barely discolouring the sky with its faint line of smoke, so small the hull that a drop of water held in Jessie's little palm might have floated it! The sea-gulls traced their graceful circles close to the cliffs: the water was high and the soft breakers plashed their snow upon the line of brown sand; close beside the old pier with its green piles the little rowing-boats bobbed their sides and noses against one another like a knot of busy-bodies gossiping scandal.

Jessie lingered over this bright scene with a heightened pulse, and a heart that insensibly joined in the purring song of the breakers. She turned away at last and walked along the parade intending to make a short cut to the library; but just as she turned the corner she met Mr. Andrews face to face.

He stopped and raised his hat.

Now Jessie had no idea how much this young gentleman admired her. The fact of his having stared at her in church had conveyed no other notion to her mind than that he was rather rude. Therefore she did not colour up when she saw him, nor betray the slightest embarrassment, but seeing him stop, stopped also.

He asked her if she did not dislike the east wind.

"I never care what the name of the wind is, providing it keeps the rain away."

"Have you received your goat yet, Miss Marchmont?"

"No; but I expect to receive it every day. I heard from Mrs. Malcolmson on Wednesday, and she said she would send it at once."

"You must let it feed in my grounds sometimes."

"Your grounds are too far away. Besides I remember telling you we had a meadow opposite our house."

"Will the owner give you permission to turn your goat into it?"

"My aunt will get his permission. I must bid you good-bye now, as I am going to Mr. Sampson's library."

"Are you?" said Mr. Andrews, who had no notion of parting with her: "so am I. My sister asked me to get her a book to read. I must hope to introduce you one of these days to Bessie. You are sure to become good friends."

Somehow men never seem to value their sisters more highly than when they are in love.

Jessie smiled faintly and then turned her head towards the sea and pouted. Mr. Andrews saw the pout, but was not in the slightest degree offended. On the contrary, he was charmed by a manner so unspeakably different from anything his experience had ever encountered. Nor should we forget that Jessie's speech could never be so downright but that it was bound to lose all its bluntness, in a young man's ears at least, by the qualifying power of her beauty.

"I meant to call upon Mrs. Lovel three days ago," said Mr. Andrews, "but I caught a cold and couldn't leave the house." Which was true. "Will she be in this afternoon?"

"Yes, unless the wind changes."

"Will you be in?"

"Most likely. The afternoons are very short and cold here."

"Why wouldn't Mrs. Lovel lunch with me that Monday?" asked Mr. Andrews, preventing Jessie from walking too fast by lagging a little behind, by which manœuvre, if he couldn't see so much of her face as he wished, he could enjoy her society longer. "Does she think I am a giant with a fee-fo-fum sort of a love for old ladies?"

"She is not so silly," answered Jessie, hardly knowing whether to smile at or resent the familiar reference to Mrs. Lovel.

"I had Mr. Lockfield with me," said he, "and you can't offer a better security for good behaviour than a clergyman. I wanted you to see my house and grounds, and introduce you to Bessie. Mrs. Lovel seemed annoyed to think that I should prefer spending my time in London to

living here. What is there to keep me here? There is something *now*. There was nothing a month ago."

This was quite lost upon Jessie.

"What does your sister do when you are away?" asked she. "She must feel very lonely and dull in that big house by herself."

"She has a great many resources, draws and writes poetry, works things on canvas — I forget what you call it — and has friends to keep her company. But her friends are not to my taste. She can endure, and even seem to relish, any ancient gossip, dressed in a bonnet like a shade for sore eyes, who will sit by her sofa and tell her that Mother Crump's cough is better, that little Billy Hodge has got rid of his measles, and that old Martin Head was buried last week. I don't care myself about time-stricken acquaintances. I like dancing and music, and if I could only find

people to invite would give a ball every week."

"I am fond of music too. I wish Aunt Lovel had a piano."

"Hasn't she a piano! How strange! I am sure you can play and sing too."

"Not very well. What makes you sure?"

"Your voice, which is full of music."

The compliment amused her, for she laughed gaily. Heavens! what dimples, and teeth, and lips!

"I know some French songs. Don't you think the French music pretty?"

"Beautiful!" said Andrews, who would have accepted any air from Beethoven or Weber as French had he been told it was. "What would I give to hear you sing a French song! Had I not inherited a house in England I think I should have lived in France. As it is, it is highly probable that some of these days I shall go and explore Normandy, where they say the country is

beautiful, for a château, and remain there. The only drawback to settling in France is, suppose there's a war?"

"The French are sure to beat."

"No doubt. They are a wonderfully plucky nation. Do you like army men?"

"My papa was in the army," answered Jessie, looking proudly.

"In the English army?"

"Of course."

"I have a relative in the army, a cousin, now in India, coming home on sick leave, so he wrote to me in a letter I got last week. I might have gone into the army if I liked; and am sorry I didn't, since you like officers."

"Are you in any profession?"

"No. There was a talk of making me a clergyman. Before that I was to have gone into the navy, where I have an uncle an admiral. It all ended in my becoming

what they call a gentleman, that is, a man without occupation."

"But if you have plenty of money there is no need for you to do anything."

"I haven't very much—two thousand a year."

"That is a very great deal, isn't it? In France it would sound an immense fortune, for you would count it in francs."

"But I ought to have had five thousand, and should have had if my grandfather hadn't been a gambler. He belonged to White's Club, in days when men thought nothing of losing twenty thousand pounds a night. He lost a great deal to Charles Fox, the celebrated statesman, and to Brummel, the man who called George the Fourth a fat fellow to his face, and also to Pope, the poet, I think, though I won't be sure about Pope; and one afternoon won ten thousand pounds from the Duke of Newcastle."

He looked at Jessie to mark the effect of these dazzling revelations, but observed that though she seemed interested, she did not appear deeply affected. They had now entered the High Street, and were nearing Mr. Sampson's Library.

"Are you fond of riding, Miss Marchmont?"

"Very fond. I used often to ride with papa at La Force."

"I have three horses in my stables, a phaeton, and a brougham. Will you make use of them?"

"What could I do with them?" she answered laughing, and scarcely conscious of the little pink that mounted into her cheek.

"One horse of mine I can recommend you as a splendid animal for a country gallop."

"I should enjoy a ride immensely," said she, halting before Mr. Sampson's door.

He looked at her with eyes very full of admiration. The poor young fellow was very far gone.

"But what will you do for a companion? My groom could follow you. . . . I suppose Mrs. Lovel would be shocked if I offered to accompany you?"

"I will talk to her about it, and see what she says."

He held Mr. Sampson's shop door open, and followed her into the dusky interior.

There was no place, perhaps, in the whole of Sandhaven, unless we except those mysterious holes in the cliff, about which something was said in another chapter, where a flirtation could have been better carried on than Mr. Sampson's library. To begin with, Mr. Sampson worked his business by himself, and was hard of hearing. Consequently there were no assistants to pretend not to be looking, and no ears to hear. In the second place, Mr. Samp-

son's books were up in the dimmest part of the shop, the shelves scarce discernible in the glimmering light; so that a young gentleman and a young lady might, under pretence of seeking a volume, make love as long as they chose, and not be seen. Happily there were no flirtations going on at Sandhaven at any time of the year, or depend upon it Sampson's life would have speedily been made a burden to him by pottering couples hunting for books that weren't there. And see the opportunities the old volumes would give a young gentleman not empty of wit, nor vacant of parts, of cracking his little joke and filling the gloom with giggles. Some of the old novels on Sampson's shelves had titles that were in themselves discourses on the tender passion. Can't you hear Amelia whispering to Gerald to give her "Sense and Sensibility," whilst he begs her to pass him "Her Heart and

Hand?" It is not difficult to be entertaining when you have a young person by your side who is so kind as to laugh before your little joke is made.

Andrews walked as if by instinct right up to the darksome recess where the books were, and felt sure Jessie would join him. But he was very much mistaken; for when Jessie had bought her note-paper, she asked Mr. Sampson to lend her his library catalogue, and walked to the door, where she just paused long enough to say "Good-bye, Mr. Andrews," and disappeared. Mr. Andrews was too polite to follow her; but he was very much mortified by the way she had given him the slip. He had hoped to enjoy another quarter of an hour with her at least. His talk of procuring a book from Sampson's Library for his sister to read was a mere excuse to remain with her. He waited, running his eyes vacantly over the backs of the snuff-coloured volumes until

he thought he could quit the shop without making her think that he was pursuing her, and then went out, giving Sampson a stiff nod as he passed, and receiving in return from that respectable tradesman as humble a bow as was ever executed in this country. He couldn't help looking down the street, but Jessie had vanished. "Never mind, I'll see her this afternoon when I call on the old woman," thought he, and started briskly in the direction of his house.

Jessie reached her home a little after one, looking wonderfully fresh and rosy after her long morning in the sunshine. She knocked at the door, and was surprised at the promptitude Jane displayed in opening it.

"I'm glad you're come, miss," said that servant. "Me and missus has been so awfully frightened, miss."

"Is that my niece?" called Mrs. Lovel's voice from the top of the kitchen stairs.

"Yes, auntie. What is the matter?"

"Jessie," cried Mrs. Lovel, emerging from the end of the hall and coming briskly forwards, "your goat has arrived, and a more ferocious creature I never heard of. The man who unpacked it pushed it into the kitchen and shut the door, and went away most cowardly. Instantly it rushed at Jane and—"

"Caught me here, miss, as niver was such a blow," said Jane, clapping her hand to her side, and putting on an expression of great agony.

"And Jane screamed out—"

"And missis come racin' downstairs—"

"For I thought that the house was on fire, so that I never received a greater shock in my life."

"And oh! its 'orns did hurt!" said Jane, still wearing her expression of great agony.

"It has been here since half-past eleven," continued Mrs. Lovel.

"And you'll git no dinner till four, for I could do no cooking," said Jane.

"Neither of us dared enter the kitchen—"

"It is mad, mum, I'm sure."

"It knocked over the two trays—"

"The largest trays, if you please, mum."

"Yes, the two largest trays, which fell with a crash that made me think the scullery was sinking in—"

"And then, mum, begging your parding, it must have put its feet into the live cinders as made it frisk about most fearfully."

"Nothing," cried the old lady, "but the hand of Providence prevented Jane from being knocked down and killed on the spot."

"Ho, mum!" said Jane with a face of indescribable agony, "I would have gone for help—"

"But I wouldn't have been left alone with such a thing for a thousand pounds."

"We neither of us could coax it, mum, could we, mum?"

"No, we couldn't. Here have I been standing on the staircase calling to it in the hope that it would mistake my voice for somebody's it knows and keep quiet."

Jessie ran to the kitchen stairs.

"Mind! mind!" cried Mrs. Lovel and Jane from the other end of the hall.

Jessie didn't mind, but entered the kitchen, where she saw the kid—for it was not yet a goat—standing near the window. She ran up to it, threw her arms round its neck and hugged it. The little animal was docile enough. Whether it knew her or not, it submitted to her caresses without any demonstration of rebellion.

"Dear little Bijou!" cried she in French, kneeling by its side, and pressing her cheek to its nose; "how glad I am to see you! Yes, here is the ribbon I put round your

neck before I left dear La Force. How pretty your eyes are, and how long your beard has grown, and your horns too!"

"What does she say?" exclaimed Mrs. Lovel, who had cautiously approached the head of the staircase, followed by Jane.

"It's goat's language she's talking, that's my belief, mum," said Jane.

"Niece! niece! is the animal safe? have you tied it up?"

"Come down, auntie, Bijou won't hurt you."

"Will it butt?" called out Mrs. Lovel.

"No. I'm kissing it."

"Kissing it?" cried Jane. "Why, what a thing to kiss." And she thought of the grocer's man.

Mrs. Lovel descended very carefully, her petticoat well above her ankles, so as to allow her legs full freedom in case a hasty flight should be found necessary. She reached the last stair, halted, and took

a peep. There was Jessie seated, with the goat's head in her lap.

"Well, of all the vicious brutes! . . ." said Mrs. Lovel, approaching the goat with tremendous courage.

"It was frisky after its long confinement," answered Jessie, turning the softest, most affectionate eyes on the animal. "Bijou wouldn't hurt anybody."

"It hurt me, miss," said Jane, emboldened by the example of her mistress's bravery, and going to the oven with an appropriating air.

It now became a question where the goat was to be lodged until a house had been built for it. Jessie hinted that she would not mind having it in her bedroom, if her aunt didn't object; but her aunt did object very vehemently. Couldn't it be given to the milkman to be taken care of for the present? Jane suggested the scullery, which was away from the kitchen, and

seldom used. That would do. A rope was found and Bijou made fast to the leg of a dresser. Then Jane set to work to cook the dinner. Mrs. Lovel repaired to the parlour, and Jessie walked as far as Mr. Cornman's to order some straw for Bijou to lie on.

CHAPTER X.

MR. ANDREWS CALLS.

I AM afraid you will think Jessie a heroine fit rather for a story "for little girls" than for a novel that aims at the dignity of the circulating library, when I speak of the pleasure it gave her to have her goat. But so innocent a maiden as this is bound to be childish in a good many ways. She must, indeed, have been bored to death at Sandhaven in no time if she hadn't possessed the delightful and enviable faculty of finding pleasure in trifles. This is the characteristic of the child's

nature, and it is possessed by all true women.

But Jessie's goat had a greater significance to her than had it been the mere toy her aunt considered it. Her father had bought it for her a few days before he died. His eyes had beheld it, his hand fed and caressed it. Thus was the Nanny consecrated in Jessie's eyes; it was a living object by which she could hold on to the past. As she scattered the straw in the corner of the scullery, and fed Bijou with pieces of bread, all the old vanished happiness came up out of the dead days. Memory made her very sad for a little while, and had Jane chosen to take a peep at what the young lady might happen to be a-doing of, she might have seen her kneeling in the straw with her arms round the goat's neck, moistening its face with her tears, so that it would seem as if both were crying.

Thanks to Bijou, no dinner was to be

had that day until after three. Jessie passed the interval in searching for a carpenter to build her goat a house in the garden. Mrs. Lovel kept her temper wonderfully. Indeed, one of the most curious features in this remarkable woman's character was her placidity under troubles that might have aggravated angels, and her warmth over trifles that no person with any self-reverence would discuss with heat, or even discuss at all. Keep her waiting for her dinner two hours beyond her time and you would find her sitting down to the tardy joint and the parboiled potatoes with the same mild countenance she would have brought to the punctual meal. Venture to hint that the Pope might not be a very wicked man, or that the French did not all agree with Voltaire and Volney, and indignation would choke her. By the time dinner was served the nervous fears that had been excited in her by the capering spirit

of Bijou had altogether subsided; she chatted pleasantly about the animal's house and where it was to be built, and questioned her niece on her morning's walk.

"Oh, aunt, I quite forgot to tell you that I met Mr. Andrews this morning, and he said he would call here this afternoon."

"Indeed! did he walk with you?"

"Yes, from the cliffs to Sampson's Library, where I left him."

"I don't think he ought to have done that," said Aunt Lovel looking annoyed.

"He was very polite."

"I should hope he was. But if any person saw you walking with him alone all sorts of rumours will be started, and a young man has no right to cause a lady to be talked about."

"What could people say?"

"This is a very small town, and a very idle town. Mr. Andrews is well known, and if he is seen walking with you there

are simpletons who will say you are going to be married to him."

"They must marry very quickly at Sandhaven," said Jessie with a merry laugh.

"What did he talk about?"

"He asked me if I liked riding, and offered me the use of his horses and his carriages."

"He is very obliging. I never knew he was so polite. And what did you say?"

"I told him I was very fond of riding. Poor papa used sometimes to ride with me at La Force."

Mrs. Lovel looked hard at Jessie. She wondered whether it were possible that her niece was a flirt. A flirt was a most odious character in the old lady's eyes.

"I think," continued Jessie, little suspecting the misgiving that was agitating Mrs. Lovel's mind, "that Mr. Andrews means to ask you if you would object to my riding with him."

"He had best not!" cried the old lady flushing up. "That would be too much."

"Isn't it considered proper in England for a gentleman to ride with a lady?"

"I don't know, I am ignorant of such customs, but I am aware of my own prejudices, and—and must defend them."

Jessie saw that her aunt was vexed, and though she was not at all sure of the cause, thought it best to drop the subject. Mrs. Lovel, always glad for an excuse to be silent when she was annoyed, lest she should say something she would afterwards regret, plunged into deep thought. She recalled what Mr. Lockfield had said about Mr. Andrews's admiration of Jessie. A sense of marriage entered her mind, and hung like a cloud over it. Was Jessie giving the young man encouragement? The other day she was laughing at his fluffy whiskers and plain face, now she was calling him

gentlemanly, and exhibiting an unwholesome longing to ride with him. Was Jessie a hypocrite? Was she in love with Mr. Andrews? What was happening? The old lady's mind grew confused.

I don't think an ungenerous thought, an unkind suspicion about Jessie would ever have visited the old lady's good heart if the girl had not lived in France. Here was Jessie's misfortune. Can you breathe the air respired by a million Jesuits and preserve your conscience? Can you shake hands with a Frenchman and keep your morals? Can you undergo a course of soupe mayger, and remain Angleesh? Mrs. Lovel had grave doubts on these points. Everything that Jessie did which did not seem perfectly satisfactory, dashed the dish of speculation and prejudices the old lady kept before her into her venerable face, and blinded her to those characteristics of the girl's nature which would have explained

everything, and submitted her as the most lovable of beings.

Scarcely was the cloth removed when, faithful to his promise, Mr. Andrews pushed open the garden gate and knocked. Mrs. Lovel saw him, smoothed her gown, and adjusted her cap.

"Callers always make me regret that I have no drawing-room," said she; "but Mr. Andrews must take me as he finds me."

He entered the room dressed well enough to have entitled him to a place of distinction against the palings in Rotten Row. His gloves were good, his cravat a very superior blue satin, his boots of a noontide effulgence. He looked as well, indeed, as it was possible for dress to make him look; and had it not been for the trifling, and, perhaps, immaterial drawbacks of his face and figure, would have passed for a handsome man.

"I am very happy to find you in," said he to Mrs. Lovel, who rose as he entered, and gave him one of her very best bows. With such solemn salutations were the belles of the Georgian era wont to give dignity to the pompous and cumbersome dances of their time.

He shook hands with Jessie and took a chair near her. They began their talk with the weather. When that topic was exhausted, Mr. Andrews got upon the subject of St. Michael's. Without expressing any opinion himself, he contrived to impress Mrs. Lovel with the notion that he deeply sympathized with her Protestant prejudices. He listened very deferentially to all she had to say, and, indeed, for some time seemed to forget that Jessie was in the room.

"Mr. Andrews," said the old lady, "it pleases me very much to meet with a young gentleman possessing such sound views as

you have on church matters. I think Mr. Lockfield told me that in early life you were destined for the clerical profession?"

"I abandoned the idea because I did not consider myself spiritually qualified to enter into holy orders."

"I understand," said Mrs. Lovel with a gracious nod. "It would be well if some gentlemen who are clergymen had been restrained by the same scruples. No one who knows me," she continued with great dignity of manner, "could doubt my reverence for the members of the clerical calling. But I am often grieved to think of the number of men who get ordained from any other motive than the love of God. Nowadays every schoolmaster who wishes to add to the number of his pupils retires for a while, and reappears clothed in a white neckcloth. Why aren't the bishops more careful? Why don't they ask more questions? Every candidate for holy orders

ought to be examined on oath, and such questions put to him as: 'What is your object in entering the Church?' 'Are you a schoolmaster, or do you mean to become one?' 'Is it your idea that ordination will assist you in a search after a rich wife?' 'Is social position your object?' 'What are your pretensions as a teacher and preacher?' 'Can you write and spell correctly?' 'Do you know anything more of theology than you are obliged to know?' A few questions of this kind," cried Mrs. Lovel, "would disqualify a crowd of men from practising religion who are now inflicting serious injury on the Church by the indifference of their hearts and the inadequacy of their brains."

Jessie was greatly amused and surprised by this outbreak. She never could have dreamt that Mrs. Lovel could talk such heresy and entertain views so entirely op-

posed to the principles that governed her. "But prejudices, my love, very often resemble ice that bears the skater for a long time, but all at once cracks and lets him in." The subject of ordination was one of Mrs. Lovel's weak prejudices; he who trod upon it was sure to be soused. However, to give her the benefit of the doubt, it is just likely that the old lady might have suspected she had overstated her case and tumbled into the slough of error, for she fixed a very severe pair of spectacles upon Mr. Andrews, full of defiance, that said as plainly as glasses can speak: "I know I have over-talked myself, but the profound consciousness of my mistake determines me not to withdraw a single syllable."

That young gentleman, however, had not called to discuss parsons but to see Jessie. Indeed, he was so little interested in theology, that he did not even know the surname of the Archbishop of Canterbury.

He allowed a short pause to follow Mrs. Lovel's energetic declamation, that the change of subject he meditated might not offend by its abruptness, and then asked Jessie some question about her goat.

It seemed to Jessie that her goat was the only idea Mr. Andrews had in his head.

"How my poor Bijou interests you, Mr. Andrews!"

"Is it called Bijou? What a sweet name! I am awfully fond of dumb animals."

"My goat has come—it is very well. It gave aunt a fright, but she will soon love it."

"I was very nearly going to take the liberty——"

"Hey?" called out Mrs. Lovel.

Mr. Andrews faced about. He had not fancied the old lady was listening. He pulled his whiskers, and said—

"I was telling Miss Marchmont that I was going to take what I fear you will consider a liberty, this afternoon."

Mrs. Lovel who, although she was now sixty, had never in her life felt perfectly comfortable in male society, exclaimed nervously—

"Pray let us hear." And looked deprecatory. It made Mr. Andrews feel as if he were really going to take a liberty.

"Your niece," said he, with a canary-coloured smile, "told me she was very fond of music, but that you had no piano. I have two pianos, one of which I was on the point of sending to Miss Marchmont this afternoon for her to make use of as long as she pleases, but I thought I would get your permission before I did so.

"You are very kind," exclaimed Mrs. Lovel, with something like a thunderstruck expression on her face; "but we could not dream of borrowing your piano, grateful as

we are to you for your offer. Jessie, I did not know you cared about music."

"I am very fond of it, aunt."

"Mr. Sampson lends out pianos by the month; I will hire one for you. You should have expressed your wish before," said the old lady.

"Mr. Andrews asked me if I sang. I told him I knew a few French songs, and that I wished you had a piano, that was all."

"Why will you borrow one of old Sampson's Jews' harps on legs when I can lend Miss Marchmont a fine-toned instrument, that will do justice to her touch and voice?" exclaimed Mr. Andrews, a little offended by Mrs. Lovel's standoffishness.

"What sort of French songs are they you know, Jessie?" inquired Mrs. Lovel, paying no heed to Mr. Andrews.

"Songs like 'Au clair de la lune,'" said Jessie, laughing.

"By the light of the moon," observed Mr. Andrews, looking at her.

"It goes on like this: 'Mon ami Pierrot: pretez moi ta plume, pour écrire un môt; ta——"

"I don't understand," interrupted the old lady.

"Shall I translate it, Mrs. Lovel?" asked Mr. Andrews, anxious to show Jessie that he knew French.

"I'll not trouble you, Mr. Andrews; I don't think I should care about French songs. If my niece sings, I hope she will entertain me with some of the old English ballads her poor mamma used to know."

"You will let me send the piano?"

"I couldn't dream of troubling you," answered the old lady, drawing herself up. She was very nearly explaining how it happened that she was without that noisy piece of furniture, but thought she should

best consult her dignity by holding her tongue.

Mr. Andrews pulled off his glove rather impatiently, and looked as vexed as a young man worth two thousand a year, with a living in his gift, and with two clergymen, a pew-opener, a sexton, and several churchwardens to flatter him whenever a pimple made him low-spirited, could look.

"I hope, Mrs. Lovel," said he, presently, "that you won't refuse me the pleasure of placing my stables at yours and your niece's disposal. Miss Marchmont is fond of riding."

"But who could ride with you, Jessie? Nobody that *I* know of rides in Sandhaven but the butchers' boys," said the old lady.

"My groom could follow her," said Mr. Andrews.

Mrs. Lovel remembered a divorce case she had once read in a newspaper of a lady

who, having been for a very long time followed by a groom, got sick of the monotonous process, and varied the dull routine by following him—to Ireland.

"I don't consider grooms fit companions for young ladies," said she, and she considered that she had made an observation which must entirely put an end to *that* subject.

"But grooms were invented expressly to follow young ladies on horseback," cried Mr. Andrews, longing for the privilege to lose his temper and call the old lady names. "The first ladies in the country ride out alone, accompanied—no, followed at a respectful distance, I mean—by their grooms."

"I don't like grooms," said Mrs. Lovel.

Jessie felt sorry for Mr. Andrews.

"Grooms," continued the old lady, "may be very useful persons to men; but as a woman, speaking for myself, I should con-

sider it as decent to ride about the country with my face blackened like a negro, as to be met alone followed by one of those poor creatures, with turn-up noses and cocks in their hats."

"Well, Mrs. Lovel," exclaimed Mr. Andrews, eagerly, "if Miss Marchmont allows me, would you have any objection to my accompanying her sometimes for a ride?"

"I—I should certainly object, Mr. Andrews, at this stage of your acquaintance."

"Then, Miss Marchmont, we must wait until we know each other better."

"Please believe me very grateful for your offer all the same," said Jessie, who thinking that her aunt had offended the young man, and hating to see anybody pained, thought his irritation might be allayed by a little extra politeness on her part.

"You are determined not to let me be of any service to you or Miss Marchmont,

Mrs. Lovel?" said Mr. Andrews, with an irritable smile.

"Nobody can be more sensible of the kindness of your intentions than we are," answered the old lady, letting her head fall back and clasping her hands in such a fashion as to make her look like a figure in a mediæval illuminated drawing.

"You are quite in error about grooms," said he. "I will take an opportunity of writing down fifty names of young ladies I know in first-rate positions who either in the country or in London are to be found constantly riding without any other companion than a man-servant."

"No doubt, no doubt," responded Mrs. Lovel, who, having had her say, and having said it pretty strongly too, felt herself under no obligation to argue the subject any further.

"If my sister were not an invalid she would be very pleased to ride with Miss

Marchmont. All the same"—(to Jessie)—"I will try and get up a riding-party. Now that I think of it, I believe that Mr. Mahony" (Mr. Lockfield's curate) "would enjoy a gallop, and I'll ask Miss Severn to join us. Do you know Miss Severn, Mrs. Lovel?"

"You mean the daughter of Mr. Elias Severn, of the Oaks?"

"Yes."

"An agreeable young woman. Her papa is reputed to have a first-rate knowledge of cattle and farming generally. What of her?"

"If I could make up a riding-party to include her and Mahony, would you mind Miss Marchmont joining?"

This drove the old lady into a corner, nor could she help admiring his persistency. She was not made of brass and marble; and vigorous as her prejudices were against the popular sentiment of love,

she must have been less than a maternal aunt, and have even wanted the essential characteristic of her sex, not to have felt flattered by all this attention to her niece from the richest young man in the neighbourhood.

"Under those circumstances," said she, looking at Jessie, "I don't think I could object. But can you ride, niece?"

"Yes, aunt?"

"Have you a riding-habit?"

"No; I quite forgot that I have no habit!" looking at Mr. Andrews.

"You don't mean to say that people in France ride without habits?" cried Mrs. Lovel, who was always for leaping to tremendous conclusions.

"I didn't say so," answered Jessie laughing. "Minnie Malcolmson used to lend me her habit when I wanted it."

"A habit is very easily got," said Mr. Andrews.

"Well, we'll see about this riding business," exclaimed Mrs. Lovel much gratified by the new difficulty.

"I rather fancy," said Mr. Andrews colouring up and glancing askew at Mrs. Lovel, "that my sister has a riding-habit."

"Oh thank you, Mr. Andrews; habits are easily made, and if my niece should ever want one——"

"Why couldn't I borrow Miss Andrews'?" asked Jessie.

"She shall send it you," exclaimed Mr. Andrews quickly.

"How can you talk like that, Jessie?" cried Mrs. Lovel. "You haven't the pleasure of Miss Andrews' acquaintance."

"When will you call that I may introduce you?" said Mr. Andrews eagerly. "Come to-morrow morning. Bessie will show you the habit—and if Mrs. Lovel shouldn't feel herself equal to the walk, I am sure Mr. Lockfield will be happy to escort you."

"At the first opportunity," said Mrs. Lovel majestically, "I will accompany my niece to Springfield House and enjoy the honour of an introduction to your sister."

"Very well, but don't defer your visit, Mrs. Lovel."

The old lady screwed her eyes into a sideways peep at the clock. Her notions of etiquette were very severe; and as this was Mr. Andrews' first visit she considered it quite time that he took his hat and went away. Poor fellow! he would have gone away long before had he found her alone. He hadn't called to see her. He was in love with Jessie and had made the discovery that the only place in the world where life was enjoyable was where she was. He had hoped to catch her alone. He had hoped to make himself agreeable to her. All sorts of hopes had animated his walk from Springfield House, and all were disappointed. How lovely she looked! What divine eyes

she had! What pearly teeth! What witching dimples were those on her chin! She seemed to like him better the longer he stayed, for she looked at him kindly and smiled when their eyes met. Poor young gentleman! That smile was only amiability and concern—the ladylike desire to make his visit agreeable, to blunt the keen edge of Aunt Lovel's candour. But it detained him longer in Mrs. Lovel's parlour than his knowledge of the laws of good breeding would have sanctioned, and when he at last rose to say good-bye, he, though he had not dined, felt that Mrs. Lovel had it in her power to make him the happiest being in the world by asking him to stop to tea.

"He certainly appears very anxious to be polite," said the old lady after watching him pass out of the garden gate. "I certainly did not like his offering to lend us his piano, and the idea of his riding with

you alone astounded me with its impudence and indiscretion. But I am willing to believe that he is hospitable and large-hearted, and that his impulses are apt to make him forget his judgment."

"By the way he talked to you at the beginning of his visit I think he has taken quite a fancy to you, aunt."

"And why not, my dear?" asked the old lady complacently. "I knew his father, and he might guess from the character I bear in this town that if I should think fit to become his friend he would find me sincere."

"I agree with you in thinking him kind-hearted."

"I never knew any one so anxious to be generous."

"He asked me to let my goat browse in his fields."

"Yes—and I consider him very polite in offering us the use of his carriage. When

I know him better I shall accept that offer. Driving was always delightful to me. This reminds me to tell you that you had better go to Mr. Sampson's to-morrow and choose a piano. It won't do for Mr. Andrews to call again and find us without one. But let us have as few French songs as possible, my child. I should never feel easy in my mind listening to words I do not understand."

CHAPTER XI.

MR. LOCKFIELD'S FAILURE.

MR. ANDREWS had no idea that he had left so good an impression behind him. On the contrary, he quitted the house with a sense that his visit had been but a series of afflicting and irremediable blunders. He felt quite savagely disposed towards the old lady. It was her contradictions, her plump refusals, that had made him appear such a fool before Jessie. Mr. Lockfield had vaguely hinted that Mrs. Lovel was somewhat obstinate in her notions of things; but he had no idea of finding her so down-

right impracticable. What on earth could make her object to Jesse's riding with a groom? People whom Mrs. Lovel would be proud to know let their daughters ride with men-servants behind them. Mrs. Lovel might as reasonably object to Jessie's driving behind a coachman.

But for the old creature's absurd obstinacy he could have placed Jessie under an obligation by lending her one of his horses; by begging her to make use of his groom; by getting his sister to send the riding-habit with a nice letter. And then, see the abundant opportunities he would have had for meeting her alone. Nothing would have been easier than to have learned from his man the direction Miss Marchmont meant to take, and meet her himself on horseback, by accident of course, and be with her for hours at a time.

He was very unused to such plain-speak-

ing, such independency of sentiment, such antagonism of prejudice, as Mrs. Lovel had opposed his wishes with. He supposed that the old woman had sense enough to guess that he had fallen in love with Jessie and that his politeness was for the niece, not for the aunt? What did she mean by coming between him and the young lady and spoiling his efforts to make himself agreeable? Other families didn't treat him so. He knew at least two young ladies who were dying of love for him; and whose fathers, mothers, uncles, cousins, housemaids, and tradesmen were all eager to make love to him for the young ladies' sakes.

Mortified and dispirited and hopelessly in love, Mr. Andrews walked slowly forward until, passing Martin Street, which was out of the High Street, he caught sight of St. Mary's Church and went towards it. It was barely half-past four—he did not dine till seven—and he thought he could not better

while away the two hours and a half than by calling on Mr. Lockfield and acquainting him with his private opinion of Mrs. Lovel.

The Rectory was a very comfortable house, with shining windows and red-brick roof, and a large garden at the back abundantly stocked with fruit-trees. The great drawback to the house was—it overlooked the churchyard. Dismal-minded people might think this no objection; but all bilious persons contended that the juxtaposition exercised a singular influence over their livers.

Mr. Andrews had the good fortune to find the clergyman at home. The servant showed him into a snug study where a pleasant fire burned in the grate. The walls were furnished with many volumes of sermons to which Mr. Lockfield was in the habit of referring before composing his own discourses. "Bossuet," he would exclaim,

"always read Homer before writing, saying, sir, that he loved to light his lamp at the sun. So I like to dip into Barrow and Horne before sitting down to work." A laudable custom which Mr. Lockfield might have enlarged with advantage to his parishioners and his own reputation by transferring all the sentences he read instead of a few into his manuscripts.

He ran in upon his young patron in his brisk, rosy way, obliged him to exchange a stiff-back seat for a comfortable arm-chair, and in a very lively and birdlike manner expressed the satisfaction he felt at seeing him.

"I have just been calling on Mrs. Lovel," said Mr. Andrews, his action and voice exhibiting that freedom from restraint which characterizes the behaviour of young gentlemen possessed of a conceited turn of mind in the presence of people who are dependent on them or whom they have

obliged. "What a very unpleasant old woman she is!"

"She has some comical prejudices, and old age makes her candid. But no woman ever had a kinder heart," answered Mr. Lockfield, nursing his diminutive leg.

"I don't know anything about her heart, but I don't like her tongue. She scarcely treats me with common courtesy. No human being could be more polite than I was. You told me she was religious and I got her upon the subject of St. Michael's, which made her gay enough, though you know I take no interest in your church squabbles. But the moment I began to speak to Miss Marchmont she flopped upon me as if—as if I was a dustman!"

"Who? Miss Marchmont?"

"No! the old woman, hang her!"

"She's jealous. Mark my words—her niece has spoken admiringly of you."

"I don't believe that. And what do you

mean by saying she's jealous? Do you mean to say that, supposing Miss Marchmont to have taken a fancy to me, Mrs. Lovel would be jealous?"

"Not in the sense you mean. Mrs. Lovel is a childless old lady who, thanks to the sweetness of Miss Marchmont's nature, feels something like a mother's tenderness for the girl. Mrs. Lovel is jealous of you just as a mother is jealous of the young man who threatens to separate her from her favourite child. She will soon get over this nonsense—and let me tell you this, Andrews: if she does take a fancy to you, you will find her wonderfully sincere."

"But I don't care about her. I called to see Miss Marchmont and was made a fool of."

"I am sorry to hear that," said Mr. Lockfield gravely.

"All was going well, as well as any fellow could wish, until I spoke to Miss

Marchmont about riding. Then down comes the old lady, claws out, face red, glasses shining, body swelling, calls grooms vulgar, cock-nosed men, says no lady ought to be followed by them, declines my offer to send her one of my pianos—that splendid instrument, you know, in the back drawing-room—snubs me because I hint that Bessie has a riding-habit which she would be glad to lend to Miss Marchmont, has a go at her niece because she says she knows some French songs, and ends by rolling about in her chair as if she meant to jump up and chivey me out of the house by shaking her dress as women frighten stray cats off."

"And yet," says Mr. Lockfield, "a better-hearted woman never lived. The good she has done in this town is incalculable. All I can say is that if once she takes a fancy to you——"

"But I tell you I don't care about her!"

"No, no! I know—it's the niece you like, Andrews," cried Mr. Lockfield, his little black eyes glistening and his double chin throbbing like a blancmange on a napkin with the energy of a convulsive chuckle.

"Well, I do like the niece. I'm in love with her. I think she's the sweetest girl I ever saw; and I say it's a dooced shame that her aunt should make me look like a fool before her."

"And nothing would give me greater happiness than to see you connected with my old friend Mrs. Lovel by marriage. You don't want money—you want affection; and unless my instinct of penetrating the human heart has utterly decayed and gone, I am prepared to stake that testimonial salver there against a bad sixpence that you will be possessing yourself of no common prize in winning Miss Marchmont's love."

"I don't doubt that. I'd propose to her

to-morrow," said Mr. Andrews with his face in a glow. "I'm like my poor governor—when I love I love. No other woman ever took me like this before. I've seen life, as you know—but Jessie Marchmont beats all the girls that ever I met."

"If I was not sure that her hair was real I should consider it false," observed Mr. Lockfield, pulling the bell for the sherry. "Young ladies seem to have finer heads of hair than they used to have when I was a youth. It may be the style of wearing it suggests a greater abundance. In my day, there was a great deal of flatness about the forehead—flatness and sausage curls in front and a strange quantity of comb behind. But Mrs. Lovel tells me that much of the hair now worn is false."

"What's to be done with an old lady who sits down right in your way if you move? who sneers at you if you try to make yourself agreeable? who won't do

anything—who declines everything—who says, 'No thank yer,' before you can well say, 'Will yer?'"

"Yes, yes, that's Mrs. Lovel's character to a T; and yet a kinder-hearted woman—"

"I wanted to get up a riding party, and meant to ask Mahony and Miss Severn to join, so that Mrs. Lovel couldn't object to her niece making one. But it turns out that Miss Marchmont has no riding-habit. Her aunt is too conceited to let her borrow Bessie's, won't give any order to a tailor to have one made, and so, if I get up my riding party, Mrs. Lovel will be able to say: 'My niece can't go — she has no habit!'"

"I'll talk with Mrs. Lovel," said Mr. Lockfield, looking very knowing and important. "I've already paved the way, and it cannot take me long to oblige her to relax her vigilance over her niece — her unnecessary vigilance. She is an old lady

you see, with proper but exceedingly antiquated ideas on the subject of etiquette. Opinions have changed so enormously during the last fifty years that statesmen who were advanced Whigs when I was a young woman—I mean man; excuse me, I was thinking of Mrs. Lovel—I say statesmen who were advanced Whigs—"

"Yes, I know—are now Conservatives," interrupted Mr. Andrews impatiently.

"Mrs. Lovel," continued the little man, receiving his young patron's impertinence very kindly, "only needs telling that young ladies are more privileged than they used to be, and are allowed with universal consent to do things that would have caused our great-grandmothers to smell burnt brown paper all day long."

"That's all she wants. Tell her that, Mr. Lockfield. Tell her it isn't considered improper for a young lady to ride out with a groom. Make her understand that."

"Leave it to me," said Mr. Lockfield, helping him to a glass of sherry.

"You just now said you had paved the way—what way, Lockfield?" inquired Mr. Andrews, who was rather literal in his appreciation of things.

"I argued with her on marriage. I gave it as my opinion—and I hope that opinion, Andrews, will never be delivered against any sentiment that my con——"

"What did you say?"

"I gave it as my opinion," continued Mr. Lockfield, frowning a little over this second interruption, "that she might consider herself honoured if you should take a fancy to Miss Marchmont."

"Well?" cried the other with melancholy eagerness.

"Well, I have known her a good many years, and couldn't feel disappointed because she didn't agree with me on the spot.

She has her prejudices—she is very strong against marriage."

"And you call her good hearted!"

"Her heart's not concerned. If it were she'd be all the other way. Her prejudices are sound in many respects. Take this view: Suppose some other young man should fall in love with Miss Marchmont; Mrs. Lovel would probably give him chase, and not lose sight of him until his head and shoulders had sunk below the horizon."

"Oh, she's welcome to insult anybody else," said Mr. Andrews grinning. "But, hang it! I am not used to her way of treating gentlemen."

"But you must give her time. What does she know of you? what does her niece know? They haven't been introduced to your sister—have never seen your house."

"Mrs. Lovel told me she would take the first opportunity she could find of calling. I suggested that you would not mind

accompanying Miss Marchmont to my house and introducing her to Bessie, so that they could talk about the riding-habit. But Mrs. Lovel tossed her head and sat upon the proposal at once."

"Get your sister to ask Mrs. Lovel and her niece to a friendly dinner."

"What would be the use? If I thought Mrs. Lovel would accept—"

"Oh, she will accept. What you mistake for haughtiness is nothing but nervousness. Her fears about her niece—that gentle little niece—would have made you roar with laughter had you heard them. Because Miss Marchmont had lived in France it was inevitable that she should be an infidel, a flirt, an eater of frogs, a student of Voltaire. Now if she could entertain such wild and fanciful apprehensions about so charming a girl as Miss Marchmont, surely you ought to forgive her for having a few odd theories about

you. Those theories will vanish the moment she knows you."

"I see no chance of her knowing me. She refuses everything," said Mr. Andrews gloomily.

"When I was a young man," exclaimed Mr. Lockfield with a gay laugh, "it would have taken a great number of obstinate old ladies to prevent me paying my addresses to a girl whom my heart told me I should do wisely to marry."

"Yes, but then you were a clergyman, and clergymen are looked upon as safe people, and invited out, and old ladies are always fond of them. If I were a curate, I should be drinking tea all the year round at Mrs. Lovel's. Your friend is prejudiced against me—that's the long and short of it. I'm a rake because I wear a shooting-coat. I'm irreligious because I like London. As if costume has anything to do with conscience! And yet she would take me in

her arms if I could exchange neckcloths and waistcoats with you."

He got up, stared through the window, and walked slowly towards the door.

"I shall look in on Mrs. Lovel to-night," said Mr. Lockfield cheerfully, "and try and induce her and Miss Marchmont to walk with me to Springfield House to-morrow afternoon."

"You know I shall be very glad to see Miss Marchmont."

Mr. Lockfield burst into a laugh as he closed the house door upon his young patron. Though Mrs. Lovel's attitude in this affair was entirely opposed to the clergyman's interest, he couldn't but be diverted by it, and see a great deal to respect in it. How many old ladies were there with marriageable nieces who would have found it worth while to repel a young gentleman with two thousand a year? When any gentleman of fortune gives the

world to understand that he is not disinclined to wed, isn't the horizon instantly clouded with elderly females eager to flatter, embrace, nurse, physic, advise, and adore him, for their own or their daughter's, cousin's, sister's sake? You have seen young Purse at a ball; you have remarked the number of elderly eyes fixed upon him; you have observed Melissa ready to languish, Chloe ready to blush, Pancharilla ready to veil her fine eyes with knowing lashes, Flavia on the alert to throw herself into the attitude that best exhibits her elegant shape, should young Mr. Purse happen to look in their direction. Your Mrs. Lovels may go to extremes, but depend upon it that if it were not for the antiseptic quality of their indifference great numbers of rich young men would annually decay of flattery, or burst under a plethora of conceit.

Besides, it tickled Mr. Lockfield's humour

to understand that there was one being in Sandhaven who could snub his young patron with a genial contempt of results. That young patron was a little bit of a bully in his soul; was fond of dictating to Mr. Lockfield, pooh-poohing his opinions, yawning in church, dwelling upon his father's kindness to the parson in presenting him with St. Mary's. Mr. Lockfield hadn't the courage to keep him in his place, to desire him not to speak of him to his parishioners as "little Lockfield," nor to laugh and shrug his shoulders if Mr. Mahony, who was disposed to be presumptuous if he met with encouragement, corrected him in any argument or denied his premises. But this want of pluck couldn't interfere with the secret satisfaction he felt to hear that somebody else, and that somebody an old lady, was doing what he dared not do himself.

Still, it would better serve his interests to incline Mrs. Lovel to a peaceful view of

Mr. Andrews. He wanted his young patron to marry Jessie for reasons that have been before stated. Old Dr. Busby used to explain the secret of his political influence by saying that he ruled the boys, the boys their mothers, the mothers their husbands. So Mr. Lockfield reasoned that if Jessie married Andrews, he, Mr. L., would rule the aunt, the aunt the niece, the niece her Peter.

He called at the cottage that evening in time for tea.

You will think he had plenty of leisure? He had.

Sunday was his busiest day. The rest of the week he could dedicate to his friends. What was there to do? His parish was a small one, and he kept a strong, healthy curate. If Penny Readings were known in those days, that very cheap and highly-entertaining relaxation for the working classes, especially when experimented upon

by a gentleman with a lisp or a voice like a saw, hadn't reached Sandhaven. The magic-lantern had been introduced, but not with the universal applause it deserved. People probably wearied of dissolving views of the Holy Land painted in Houndsditch, and of the travels of St. Paul, illustrated by copious extracts from Matthew Henry's Commentaries. Nor did cottage-lectures as yet prevail, nor any of those current combinations of instruction and amusement which nowadays wholly absorb the clergy out of the bosoms of yearning society, and leave them scarce a moment that they can call their own.

Mr. Lockfield found the ladies in, as he might have expected. Moreover tea was on the table, as he had also reckoned on. Mrs. Lovel, always glad to see him, welcomed him heartily; and Jessie prettily made way for him to catch the warmth of the fire.

"So you had Mr. Andrews here this afternoon," said he, after having talked the tea-tray out of the room, and exhausted seven local topics.

"Did he tell you he had been here?" asked Jessie laughing, and wisely suspecting that the young gentleman had expressed himself rather warmly on the subject of his reception to the clergyman.

Mr. Lockfield mistook her interest and felt gratified. "Come!" thought he; "Andrews's name instantly excites her; what can be more promising?" He looked at her hard and answered, "Yes," with a smile that enveloped him, as was usual when his spirits were good.

"I am disposed to think him a liberal young gentleman," said Mrs. Lovel, holding up her forefinger threateningly at the cat who was couched at her feet, moving an excited tail, and obviously meditating a spring. "He was very profuse in his offers,

wanted to lend us his horses and carriages, to send us his piano, and a riding-habit. His views on religion are sound. I was agreeably surprised. I must own when you introduced him I had a presentiment that he was careless in his morals."

"What did he say about religion?" asked Mr. Lockfield anxiously.

"He doesn't agree with the St. Michael's people. He has no sympathy with gaudy displays. He likes intelligible simplicity and undistracting walls."

"He is right," said Mr. Lockfield emphatically. "I think a young man deserves respect for holding such views. It is the young who are generally led away by innovation."

"I am very glad," he continued after a few moments' pause, "that you like my friend. There *was* a time, I confess, when I used to fear that the fortune he was to inherit would deprave his mind, and leave

him indifferent to the deeper interests of the spirit. But the contrary is the case. I have always found his hospitality elegant and splendid, his conversation intelligent and vivacious, his manners easy and not undignified; and he wants nothing, nothing to render him an excellent specimen of the British squire, to keep him upon his estate, and to improve the neighbourhood by promoting a little more social festivity than our fellow-townspeople at present indulge themselves in—but a wife."

Jessie laughed at a conclusion that sounded rather like an anti-climax. Perhaps she was amused by the pompous air the little gentleman had assumed whilst ventilating his obviously well-rehearsed periods.

Mr. Lockfield was disappointed that she did not colour up and look hard at the carpet.

"Well, why doesn't he marry?" de-

manded Mrs. Lovel. "The world is well stocked with silly women."

"Why silly, Mrs. Lovel? why silly? She may be vain, pert, insipid, ugly, anything you like—but surely the woman who secures a young man worth two thousand a year, a fine estate, a seat in the House of Commons, for that he must come to, a baronetcy, for that is certain to follow the seat if he minds his votes, and—and—"

"Wherever are you getting to?" cried Mrs. Lovel with a merry laugh that didn't sound unlike the noise wood makes kindling in a fire; "you'll set him on the throne in a minute."

"His prospects are boundless," said Mr. Lockfield with deep feeling, and an askance glance at Jessie. "I wish I had them and was his age to realize them."

"He didn't strike me as having much mind," remarked Mrs. Lovel; "did he you, niece?"

"I thought him pretty intelligent," answered Jessie, who just because she had found positively nothing to admire in him, except his offer to lend her a horse, would not say anything in dispraise. This is the sort of amiability that swells coxcombs with pride, and hurries youths with badly-shaped heads into ardent offers of marriage.

"I don't think a man with any smartness of intellect would have offered to lend us a piano," said Mrs. Lovel. "There is a description of kindness I never greatly relished—the kindness of lending things."

"Mr. Andrews meant it kindly, aunt," said Jessie.

"I don't suppose he wanted to insult me, niece. Does his sister play, Mr. Lockfield?"

"I am not sure. She is a great invalid. I wish you knew her. Your conversation would give her great pleasure. She is, after yourself, ma'am, as pious-minded a

lady as I know; and is always helping the poor in some way or other, either with her needle or by donations of money."

"I must take an opportunity to call. I have heard that she is charitable, but I suppose the reason she is so little talked about is because she is so little seen."

"I am going to Springfield House to-morrow afternoon. Will you and Miss Marchmont accompany me?"

"To-morrow is too soon. There is no need to be in a hurry. If I see no reason to change my mind, I will call some day next week."

"Ah, Mrs. Lovel, you are too great a disciplinarian in matters of etiquette for this age. I applaud your prejudices; but I don't think you need stand on any ceremony with young people like the Andrewses, who are too anxious to make your acquaintance not to consider the ceremoniousness oppressive that delays their pleasure."

"If I live to be a hundred years old," said Mrs. Lovel looking steadfastly at her little friend, "I hope I shall never forget the lessons in politeness that my mamma taught me. Is it because society is nowadays lax in its observances that I am to be lax? It might one day become the fashion not to go to church; but would the fashion keep me from attending divine worship? I have nothing to do with caprice. The art of politeness is based upon rules as permanent as the rules of English grammar. The present generation may vary them if they please; but *I* shall act as yours and my mother did, and as I hope and believe my sister Lavinia would have wished her child to act."

The solemn manner in which Mrs. Lovel delivered herself of these remarkable words effectually put an end to Mr. Lockfield's hope of gratifying Andrews by bringing Miss Marchmont to Springfield House next

day. Of course he was vexed; but what could he do? He dared not exhibit too much interest in his patron's love. What would Mrs. Lovel think if she found him out? She was well aware that it was the business of clergymen to celebrate marriages; but wouldn't she have held it a most unwarrantable extension of an unavoidable misfortune to learn that clergymen had no objection to make love for young gentlemen as well as to marry them?

So Mr. Lockfield very wisely refrained from saying anything more about the visit to Springfield House, but talked on other subjects, having no reference whatever to marriage, or to Mr. Andrews, until it was time to go.

END OF VOL. I.

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